No.14 FEBRUARY 1990

A NEWSFIELD PUBLICATION

# FEAR

FANTASY, HORROR AND SCIENCE FICTION £1.95 North America $4.95

## CHILD'S PLAY

Are you game?

## RICHARD LAYMON

Frolics in Funland

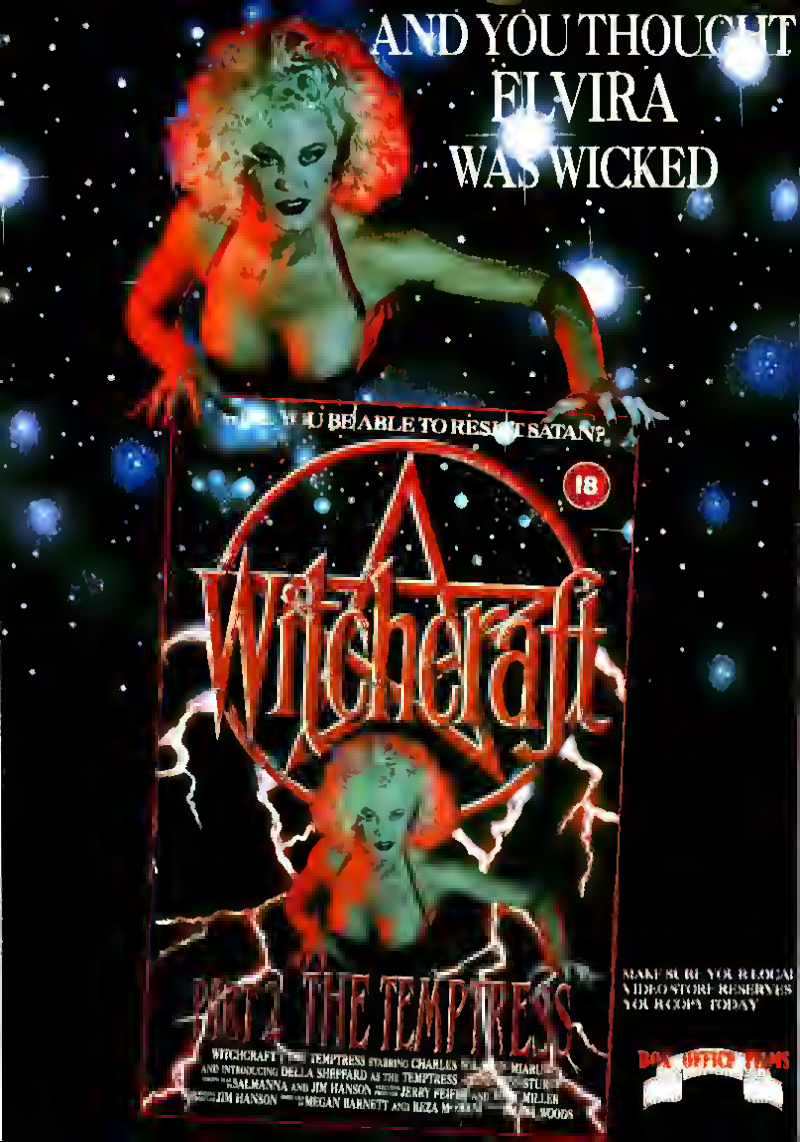
## CANNIBALS

What ONLY the censor saw

## Rebirth of the British horror movie BILLY THE KID

PLUS . . . Ray Harryhausen, J G Ballard, Beauty and the Beast and a gobbet of fiction from Ian Watson

INSIDE: EIGHT FEARFUL STORIES TO CHILL YOUR BONES!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# FEAR

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*EDITORIAL* PO Box 20, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB ☎ (0584 87) 6851 fax (0584 87) [illegible] *Managing Editor* John Gilbert *Deputy Editor* Paul Cowie *Art Editor* David Western *Editorial Director* Oliver Frey *Consultant Editor* Mark Salisbury *US Editorial Consultant* Philip Nutman *Directory Assistant* Stanley Waters *Production Manager* Jonathan Rignall *Art Assistant* Matthew Uffindell *Supervisor* Tim Morris *Assistant* Richard Mullchamp, Bobb (The Rev) Hamilton, Jimmy Reddard *ADVERTISING Group Advertising Manager* Neil Dyson *Advertising Sales Executive* Sarah Chapman ☎ (0584 87) [illegible] *Classified* (0584 87) 5852 *Staff ORDER* Carol Kinsey *SUBSCRIPTIONS* PO Box 20, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB ☎ [illegible] *Typesetting* Tweaks Shell Press, Ludlow, and by Apple Macintosh Computers *Systems Operator* Ian Chubb *Colour Origination* Sean Studios, Islington, London *Printed in England* by Bulman Web Offset, Watling Street, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK2 2HZ a member of the BPCC Group *Distribution* COMAG, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex.


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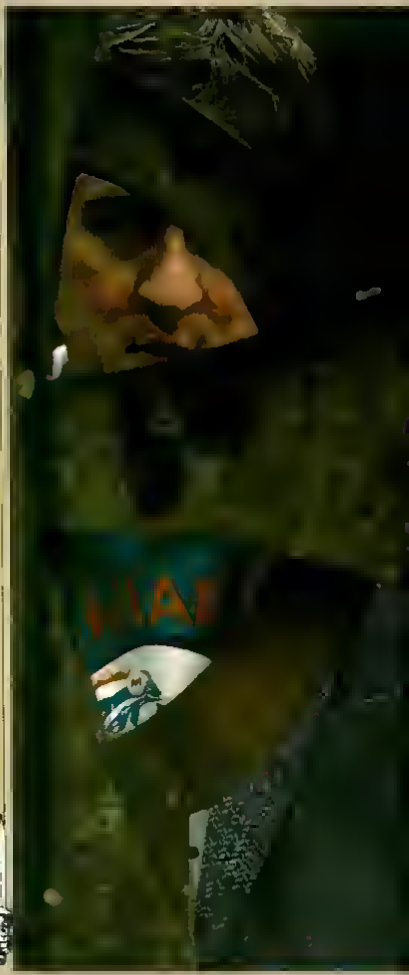


# SUMMING UP

Jury service. It's a public duty, or so I was informed when I started my two week stint in early December.

For those of you who aren't acquainted with the British system of justice, every week some unlucky member of the population gets a message from their nearest court requesting that they attend on a specific date. They duly turn up, are shown into a waiting room and there they remain unless called out to act as a juror on a case. I make no sound sarcastic about the whole system but it kind of gets you that way when six out of your days in court are spent reading and chatting to anyone who will listen. I must, however, admit that the Scottish jury system gave me the idea for this month's editorial – and it is not boring or about doom.

Looking at the way a jury operates, I decided to apply similar principals to see what the genres of fantasy, horror and science fiction seem to be like in the next decade. After all, a jury looks at the facts to determine the truth and those convicted of crimes are then re-offend. So it is with the genres that operate in cycles of popularity.

Currently the horror market is undergoing rapid change and is a slight dip in popularity. There is a dissatisfaction with the quantity not good quality. Movies such as *Jacob's Ladder* and *Nightbreed* will help, but the cinema next year looks to be a market is falling apart because of lack of input and young blood. The addition of Splatterpunk has died and the market needs an injection of adrenalin. If it is not to go into a decline similar to that of the Western at the end of the Seventies.

Fortunately, horror is a flexible field and there are several aces near the top of the deck. One of them is an increased interest in the occult and black magic which surfaced last year and looks set to wax during the early Nineties. Also Gothic influences are reappearing and mixed with contemporary themes and settings, could prove the lifeblood of the industry – unless of course authors and filmmakers go for hackneyed clichés, ripping off the likes of Poe or shock of shocks, transforming the tenets of Gothic horror for the modern world. If these transformations are successful we can look forward to healthy growth in the horror genre at least during the next five years.

Those five years are also likely to see an increased blurring of the genres as branches of fantasy and SF grow more and more into the horror story and vice versa. Until recently, the genres have kept strictly to their own techniques, concepts and timezones. Now writers in each of the genres are abandoning their elitism preconceptions and timidity to combine the elements of fantasy and SF. After all, who says you can't have speculative high tech stories with twists of horror? In the same way, now that we've got out of the gore ful horror stories can concentrate on moving back the boundaries. After all there have been a lot of promises made in that direction during the past year, but very little fulfilment.

The blur in the line between horror and fantasy exacerbated by the deflection by writers known for the former to the apparently milder boundaries of the latter again means that the horror genre is losing its identity. So called fantastic fiction, which appears to be more acceptable to the reading public and therefore publishers is replacing hardline horror on the shelves and occasionally getting into the bestseller lists. Many of these lists, however, are made up of orders from distributors to retailers, not retailers to customers, and a great many of these sophisticated fantasies spend several months on the shelves – which just goes to prove that the public hates pretension.

Unsurprisingly, the SF field is increasing in popularity. Generally untainted by the tussel between fantasy and horror, it enters the Nineties in fine fettle with a whole new generation of talented fictioneers culled from the mature ranks of industry pundits who it must be said, know their onions and can deliver a tasty tale. Unfortunately, there is little recognisable new talent in the horror or even the fantasy fields. There are one or two up-and-coming young writers but unfortunately, in the world of horror you're either a somebody or a nobody. Notso in science fiction in which ideas never give way to a writer's popularity and in the great majority of cases an author's name is usually set smaller than the title of their book.

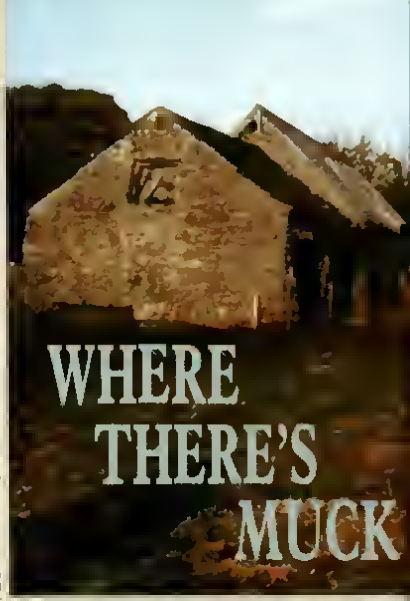
So it looks to be an undoubtedly great year for the science fiction field with a great deal of effort being put into promotion by publishers such as Legend and Pan. If horror and fantasy can overcome their identity crises, it looks like being a hot decade for them. Of course only time and a vast jury of readers and cinemagoers will tell.

I rest my case for another year.

John Gilbert

**"The market needs an injection of adrenalin if it is not to go into a decline similar to that of the Western at the end of the Seventies"**

**Revenge of Billy the Kid has the lot – Satanic monsters, blighted love, corpses and dung heaps FEAR's Patience Coster visited the MacDonald family's farm to experience a day in the shoot of a new British independent movie**



# WHERE THERE'S MUCK

A wellington-booted figure looms into view struggling through the sea of mud. "I wouldn't park there," it cries urgently. "You may never get out alive!"

Until this moment it has been one of those mellow November mornings. The Welsh countryside – all long shadows, ground mist and golden sun – is at its most atmospheric. But down on Pontygsith Farm, in the Isle of the Black Mountain, five miles north of Abergavenny, the fading light is already beginning to pose problems for the cast and crew of *Revenge of Billy the Kid*.

From a distance, the rambling farmhouse looks innocent enough, but on closer inspection the reasons why Montage Films chose this location in which to shoot their first film – a low budget horror/comedy – become painfully apparent.

The wellington booted figure turns out to be Ross Smith, unit publicist and re-writer on *Billy*. He chats enthusiastically as we make our way slowly through the swamp and into the yard. "It's pure cow shit as far as the eye can see," he comments with evident satisfaction.

**"It's pure cow shit as far as the eye can see"**

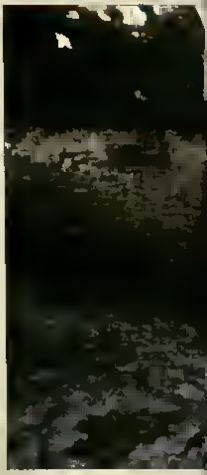
A handful of actors and technicians in various stages of dishevelment wade around in the mire – getting into role, taking light readings, drinking tea, shooing chickens into (or out of) shot. Liquid manure slops over the tops of the wellies.

Great location, isn't it? Ross's promotional zeal seems somewhat to extend beyond the bounds of duty.

Alongside a roofless cowshed, a ten foot high wall of dung is banked up. In front of it another oozing heap is crowned with a wooden crucifix set at a jaunty angle. Below the crucifix, half buried in shit, lies a semi decomposed corpse. Stifling the urge to scream, I follow Ross into the farmhouse.

The house is pretty much an extension of the yard: there is no running water, no inside toilet, the best save from a cast iron range in the kitchen – cats occupy every available piece of furniture and ancient newspapers and boxes litter the mud-besmirched square of broken linoleum on the floor.

"This is exactly how we found it," says Ross. "We just added a few cobwebs, that's all. Actually, we're thinking of telling people the film was shot in a studio, and that we production designed it!"



## THE THREE RONNIES

"It's a story – *Revenge of Billy the Kid* centres on the MacDonalds, a farming family, who inhabit an imaginary island. The farmer's daughter, Ronnie (all three children are called Ronald because their mum liked the name), begins an affair with a boy from the mainland and a feud ensues because the islanders hate the mainlanders and vice versa. (It's a real Romeo and Juliet number.) To add to the MacDonald family's troubles, the island is

# THERE'S MONTAGE

terror wed by an ugly monster called Billy who is half man and half goat

The monster is based on the idea of a pagan image of Satan says Ross who wrote the film s script with producer Tim Dennison and director Jim Groom back in August 1988 We wanted to do a horror movie but we only had a very low budget. Our original idea was to do a horror movie set in a hospital but when we finished the treatment we decided it was actually offensive We thought Let s not do something offensive let s just do something in bad taste So we decided to set it on a farm The three started to look for locations and discovered Pontysgell Farm almost immediately But Jim s a perfectionist and he wanted to look further After a year of hunting they returned to their original choice It was definitely the best, says Ross

With a twenty-five strong crew (seven of whom have never worked on a feature film before and a budget of under £1 million, there is certainly very little spare fat in this project but Ross says everyone concerned is immensely committed and enthusiastic and believes that working a fifteen hour day on freezing and filthy conditions has been conducive to creativity Everyone just mucks

**"Actually, we're thinking of telling people the film was shot in a studio, and that we production designed it!"**

Main picture director Jim Groom and producer Tim Dennison (on right) have a field day on the set of Revenge of Billy the Kid Left starry-eyed in the film on top farmyard manure plays a starring role

"He just drops down dead one evening so the MacDonalds stick him on the compost heap"

Top: Ronnie MacDonald (Samantha Perkins) cradles slime baby Billy. Below: the rotting corpse of Grandpa Pete

in

Which reminds me to take him to task about the stuff on the dung heap. Oh that's Grandpa Pete. In the movie he just drops down dead one evening so the MacDonalds stick him on the compost heap they're a luck family, you see. They put a cross there with his name on it and the body gradually decomposes. Although the corpse outside is obviously a dummy, Tim Dennison was granted the dubious honour of playing the live action Pete. We threw Tim on the compost heap and he slid all the way down to the bottom – he did it in just one take!

## KILLING MACHINE

During the course of the film, Billy the monster mutates through three stages of animatronic and prosthetic development, from cuddly slimy baby to seven foot killing machine, so it is fortunate for Montage that they are able to call on the skills of FX specialists Neill Gorton, Steve Painter and Alan Hedgcock. The three artists recently left Bob Keen's Image Animation to set up on their own and *Billy* is their first solo project.

Although baby Billy is just a latex dummy, Billy Mark Two is a working model constructed of foam rubber over fibreglass and linked to a slave system so that facial muscles and limbs can be made to move. And Billy Mark Three? He's a closely guarded secret, but suffice it to say that when he reaches maturity, Billy the Kid is a real mean dude.

Still only in their early twenties, Neill, Steve and Alan have an impressive track record, including work on *Waxwork*, *The Unholy*, *Hellbound: Tale of the White Worm* and the forthcoming Clive Barker feature *Nightbreed*. So how did they scale these dizzy heights so quickly? Neill explains: "From kids we've always been interested in special effects as a hobby – we used to get all the mags and read up on it all the time. We were just lucky that it turned into a profession. There's so much to it, but you can learn a lot in school as well. We use a lot of chemistry to make foam skins and various makeup materials, engineering is helpful as well – with all the metalwork. You soon learn that FX is a lot more than just rubber masks."

"I dropped out of art college after six months because it was hindering me more than anything else. I didn't have any time to do a portfolio. Then I got some work with Chris Tucker – so after that I had a name behind me, which was useful, then I came to London and went round knocking on doors. You've really got to push yourself – and steer away from doing gore effects, they don't impress. Art. Interest in design and sculpture is very useful. I know people who have got jobs just with sketches because their designs and ideas are so good. Originality is the main thing."

## FILTH AND SQUALOR

Another impressive aspect of this entrepreneurial caper is that *Revenge of Billy the Kid* has been financed solely by Montage Films

Left: Nick Gaston and Steve Patater with Billy Mark Two. Above: the veteran of over 200 feature films, actor Michael Balfour plays Gyles MacDonald. Below: the MacDonald clan with local character Roy the dog. All photos by David Western.

Until recently Tim Dennison and Jim Gill ran Montage exclusively as a postproduction and editing company but the lack of available funding for first time features in Britain prompted them to branch out into film production. People were interested in the project, says Tim but only to the extent that they would give us a distribution deal once the picture was shot which didn't help us. So that was the prime reason for doing something with our own money.

Tim is perfectly candid about the source of inspiration for the plot of *Billy*, which arose out of the constraints of their budget. We all liked the horror genre so we thought "Well why not?"

The film is shot on a new type of 16mm Kodak stock and then blown up to 35mm. We did some test shots and got the labs to blow them up says Jim. Then we viewed them at the Odeon Leicester Square so that we could see them on a really big screen. I've been in editing for twelve years or so now and I couldn't tell whether it had been shot on 35mm or on 16mm – it looked that good. The rushes have a kind of comic book feel for the comedy scenes the colours are very rich and exaggerated but when the horror aspect comes in we're going to make it much moodier and darker.

Ross looks concerned. "The trouble with film is that it seems to take away all the rough edges" he says ruefully although the location is dirty it's difficult to make it appear dirty enough on film.

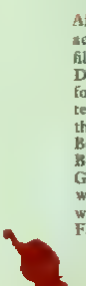
By whom or what has we the three filmmakers been influenced? Well I think a lot of the camerawork and angles are influenced by Joe Dante says Ross and there's a bit of *Jabberwocky* in there too. But *Revenge of Billy the Kid* is without doubt the dirtiest film in the history of the British film industry. The claim is that *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* is probably the dirtiest film ever made – until now! I don't think we could have done it though had it been a three month shoot or a Kubrick special but getting mucky for one month is OK.

At that moment director of photography Dave Reid dashes hurriedly across the yard. We're losing the light he bellows and several chickens stand to attention. Ross grabs his clipboard and wades back onto the battlefield. It's just filth and squalor all the way he shouts back over his shoulder. Great fun!

**"Revenge of Billy the Kid is, without doubt, the dirtiest film in the history of the British film industry"**

# MARK OF THE BEAST

**After years of character acting on stage and in film, British thespian Roy Dotrice has suddenly found fame in a new television adaptation of the classic fantasy, Beauty and the Beast. Below, Juanita Elefante-Gordon talks to the man who brings wit and wisdom to the role of Father.**



is the rumour of Catherine Hardwicke's demise true. Sadly for *Beauty and the Beast* actress Linda Hamilton has left the series to become a full-time mother. In fact, the two-hour *Beauty and the Beast* special series premiere will be, as it were, her swan song.

While it is difficult to imagine this classic fable minus the Beauty, actor Roy Dotrice maintains that things are not as beastly as they may seem. Our feeling around the set is one of guarded optimism, he says. Still, the question ringing in people's minds will be: Does it take two to tango?

Well, there are several kinds of romance. *Beauty and the Beast* is romantic in the spirit of Byron and Shelley as opposed to you know, Harlequin Romances, argues Dotrice. It's the sort of romance that goes beyond just love stories. It's a way of looking at the world, a way of looking at life. It's the whole notion of living life to the fullest that the world is still full of adventure and compassion and wonderful stuff.

I think the writers have handled this issue as realistically as possible. So yes, I think the shows are going to continue to be romantic.

Dotrice plays Father, a warm witty storyteller with a bone-dry sense of humour, a brilliant recluse who has given up life. Above for a home in the secret chambers and tunnels beneath New York City. In this literary fantasy drama, Father is Vincent's (the Beast's) surrogate parent, having raised him underground from the time when he was abandoned as an infant. Father is the founder of the utopian society which exists below and serves as mentor and guide to all its inhabitants.

Until the part of Father came along I had driven myself into obscurity as a character actor in layers of makeup for parts such as Caliban and Julius Caesar – which I used to think of as acting with a capital A, says Dotrice. Now I'm able to put my own looks and personality into the Father character. We're even similar in many ways – particularly in sharing a sensitivity to good theatre and good music, he smiles.

Ironically, Dotrice nearly ended up beneath some really heavy makeup as Vincent. I read for the role a couple of times and everybody seemed pleased. Then Ron Perlman came in. He's very athletic and he has the size – he's huge, and the voice. Well, I was obviously very much out of the picture at that point, [laughs] but two weeks later I received a call from the show's producers asking if I would be interested in playing Father.

Doing a weekly series had been my dream, and the idea of more people seeing me on television in one night than have seen me perform throughout my entire career on stage was also an inducement, I suppose. And I'm thrilled that I didn't get Ron Perlman's part of Vincent, because the part I did is in makeup four and a half hours a day!

## RUSSIAN PLAGUE

The character of Father took a dramatic turn in the second season and was Dotrice's concession assisted by a little creative manipulation on his part, like penning the episode *Ashes to Ashes*.

There wouldn't be any point in writing an episode if I didn't write a good part for myself! I tried to think of the most horrendous thing that could happen down in the caves and tunnels. So I thought what would happen if we had a situation where an epidemic, a plague, hit that underground community? They can't all suddenly run upstairs, they have to stay down there and isolate themselves. The result is that it would spread like wildfire.

I thought it might be an idea if we had the plague brought in by a Russian. So I had a Russian defecting from a ship in New York Harbour, he comes ashore and is rescued by Vincent and brought down to Dad in the caves. He gets on very well and speaks pretty good English. An opportunity I thought to discuss philosophies between East and West – which looking back now, seems almost obsolete! Anyway, you have this chap from a communist country extolling the virtues of capitalism and Father, who is in a capitalist country, and who has formed down there an almost perfect communist state.

It's a commune where decisions are made by committee and by majority vote. Everybody has equal rights and everything is shared equally. Communism in its purest form really. This is kind of ironic because Father was originally jailed when his career was ruined with the McCarthy trials – he was accused of communism and put in prison for it!

A veteran of more than a dozen films, Dotrice is best known by fantasy genre fans as the crazed scientist in *Elementary* and for his portrayal of Commissioner Simmonds in the *Brotherhood* and *Earthbound* episodes of *Space 1999*. He also appeared as the French vampire in the *My Ghost Writer The Vampire* episode of *Tales From the Darkside*. He is, however, particularly thrilled with the role of Father which he feels, more or less able to play as himself.

There's a sense of elegance about the language and a literacy which is quite astonishing for primetime television. For years we've been underestimating the intelligence of the average American audience. Now I think we're allowing for the fact that we think they're as dense and can appreciate these things – and our ratings have proved that we're right!

A while ago the producers were a little terrified of plunging people into a subterranean world because people have been brought up on a glamorous diet of *Dallas* and *Dynasty*. They thought it would be too much of a culture shock going down into that dark, dank atmosphere of the caves. But in all the letters we get the interest is not with the DA's office and what happens up there, but in the underground world and what happens down there.

*Beauty and the Beast* may be high quality TV fare, but it is not without its share of amusing mishaps. I remember right at the beginning of the series when Ron had these teeth – these canines – which just didn't fit properly. On one occasion he had to kiss me and when he came away, I had these fangs stuck in my forehead!

Father was exactly the type of exposure I needed, Dotrice admits. The fact that people recognise me in the street now is actually quite astounding. It always been a case of: Will the real Roy Dotrice please stand up? and now I'm getting the opportunity to do just that!

"I'm thrilled that I didn't get Ron Perlman's part of Vincent, because the poor lad is in makeup four and a half hours a day"

Ray Danton (on left) and Ron Perlman in Beauty and the Beast

**I do feel that the film medium is a tremendously powerful one, if used properly. Of course, it is very rarely used properly'**

# I AM LEGEND

A writer Richard Matheson has done it all. His credits include The Shrinking Man, Hell House and Hell. He wrote teleplays which have been produced by the likes of Steven Spielberg. However, as FEAR's Fiction Writer discovered, this veteran writer is all too well acquainted with the things that have been done in the name of Fantasy.

Who is Richard Matheson, you ask? Well, he is just someone who in words have had an impact on literally millions of people because he is, in fact, four writers.

Firstly, Matheson is the author of such classic novels as *I Am Legend*, *The Shrinking Man*, *Hell House*, *Bid Time Return* and *What Dreams May Come*. His most recent book, published in Hardcover in England, is *Earthbound*, which was originally released in the 1970s in a botched and heavily edited edition which he disowned and had issued under his pseudonym Logan Swanson.

Secondly, he is a marvellous short story writer and recognised as one of the most talented in the field. Indeed, his best work will be issued soon by the American specialty publisher Scream/Press as the *Collected Stories of Richard Matheson*, though these pieces of fiction first appeared in such treasured paperback volumes as *Shock!*, *Third From the Sun* and *The Shapes of Space*.

Thirdly, as a screenwriter Matheson was responsible for a number of fine 1960s horror movies inspired by the stories of Edgar Allan Poe, directed by Roger Corman and starring Vincent Price in several Poe films (*House of Usher*, *The Pit and the Pendulum*, *Tales of Terror*, *The Raven*, *Comedy of Terrors*), he also worked on films produced in England: *Burn, Witch Burn* (based on the novel *Conjure Wife* by Fritz Leiber), *De Sade, Die! Die! My Darling* and *The Devil's Bride*. He also adapted his novels *The Shrinking Man*, *Hell House* (released as *The Legend of Hell House*) and *Bid Time Return* (released as *Somewhere in Time*). Two unsuccessful versions of *I Am Legend* have so far been produced.

Finally, however, Matheson, who was born in New Jersey in 1926 and has lived for many years in southern California – is perhaps best known for his television work. Besides teleplays for such memorable movies as *Duel* directed by Steven Spielberg, he also wrote the teleplay for what was to become (at that time) the most successful made-for-television movie ever, *The Night Stalker*. This film later inspired a sequel and the television series starring the unstoppable reporter Kolchak.

Matheson was also, incidentally, one of the top writers for a half hour black and white television series called *The Twilight Zone*. So evidently, only the surface has been scratched of this mountain of talent.

## POWER MISUSED

**SW Admirers of your work will say that you've written far too few novels in your career. One of your most popular, *Hell House*, was reportedly written over a ten year period. Why so long?**

RM Well, it wasn't because I was writing it for ten years! I had so much other work to do out here that I would put it aside. Then go back to it. It doesn't sound like much money, compared to what they're paying for books now, but at the time I had gotten a $5000 advance, and I was too cheap to give it back (laughs), even though I just wanted to drop the whole project. So I just kept labouring at it through the years.

The first version of *Hell House* I submitted was told in the first person – each of the characters writing their own story – which is kind of interesting, but it's very difficult. If not impossible, to get any suspense that way. Because everybody who's writing can only write about something that's already taken place. Therefore, if somebody's writing a book, you know that no matter what they go through, they already got through it, because they're writing a book!

**SW When you say other work you're of course referring to your numerous television and film assignments?**

RM Oh sure. Of course. Although I've had success in novels, I sometimes think maybe I should no longer keep trying, because although they work out reasonably well, none of them have sold. Hit. Maybe *Hell House* did. But then only a film, to me, finally was that they sold as motion pictures. I suppose it's nice to have a couple of novels that people call classics. *The Shrinking Man* and *I Am Legend*, so obviously I'm going to keep on writing them. But I do feel that the film medium is a tremendously powerful one, if used properly. Of course, it is very rarely used properly.

## TWILIGHT YEARS

**SW I'm hardly the first to tell you that an enormous influence you've been on an entire generation of young writers and filmmakers. Do you think the influence has come mostly from your published writing, or your *Twilight Zone* episodes and the horror and suspense novels?**

RM I know Stephen King has said this, which is very gratifying. King said that because of reading *I Am Legend*, he realised it was not necessary to write everything like HPL overall. That you could have a contemporary shopping mall, housing that sating and still do a horror story. So that was very crucial in his decision as to what he was going to write.

But now, of course, people probably don't read books or short stories that much anyway, and there are producers out here who only know me – there is a claim out here – "Hollywood" and I would qualify for it – because a lot of young producers and executives grew up with the *Twilight Zone*. It is understandable, because that's all they could know – I don't have anything in print in particular, except an occasional reprint.

**SW In spite of the influence you've had on others in the field of horror and dark fantasy, the term "Horror" is one you've never appreciated having associated with your work.**

RM If things like *Friday the 13th* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and *Scanners* is "horror", then I've never written in that vein. I don't think I've ever written anything, except maybe a scene here and there in *Hell House* – that was gruesome, ghastly stuff. It was explicit sexually, yes, but I don't know if it was more horrible than anything that had been written before. But sex and horror are all the rage now.

## NEEDLEWORK

**SW Certainly none of the films you wrote in the 1960s would qualify as what most young people label as horror. Nowadays the popular theory is that we must see *everything*.**

RM I think now the viewers are assaultised, they've seen so much. I'd hit the only way to reach them is to stick the needle in further, every time – to get any kind of reaction. This is not a good thing, by any means.

**SW Do you think today's horror writers and filmmakers have to do this because audiences are so jaded they won't accept anything else but the explicit blood and gore?**

RM Oh sure. They don't *have* to do this – they do it because it's what sells. It's bullshit! They're trying to say it's anything else.

**SW Yes, but what about the classic philosophy of the catharsis – we purge our evil intentions by seeing others act them out on stage or in a book or movie?**

RM Like everyone, I used to believe in the old theory that by experiencing these horrors vicariously, you are able to get them out of your system and are therefore able to cope with the horrors of reality more efficiently. I don't believe that now. I believe everything you put in your mind stays there. The more crap these kids and young people are putting in their minds, the worse their minds are going to get. Because it doesn't trickle out, while they're asleep. It's always in there. It's rooted. And one of the proofs is that the only things that will scare them are things that get worse and worse all the time. More horrific...

I don't want to blow up an entire field of literature, which would be ridiculous. But we are living in a very violent period of time – with the drugs and the street killings, the drive-by shootings. New York is like a nightmare, a jungle. Washington DC is a total horror. And Los Angeles is apparently now the murder capital centre in the country. There's been a general deterioration in society – there's no doubt about it. The horror movies are just a reflection of that. It's symbiotic: the public wants it, and Hollywood therefore provides it. It's a circle which just goes on and on – they keep making pictures like that knowing they'll succeed, and if some of them don't succeed, they assume it's because they're not horrific enough. So they'll make it even worse.

Even *that* is not working now. I think there's actually a change in the attitude of the mass viewers because pictures are making money now at the box office that didn't, like a while back, like *Fatal Attraction* and *Dead Poets Society* and *Rain Man*.

## THE DREAMER OF OZ

**SW Has your work been of any benefit to society?**

RM Beyond entertainment value? Probably not. I can't think of any. Just the fact that I've been able to scare people doesn't make me a great guy. I've entertained them, that's all it all you can say.

**SW Is that enough?**

RM No. It's not enough for me now. That's why I'm trying to get into projects that have something more to say.

**SW Is part of the reason you've never had a chance to work, on major mainstream projects the fact that you've always been identified strongly as a genre writer? As you know all too well, you're best known to the public as Science fiction writer Richard Matheson?**

RM Until then I understand why – I have not written any science fiction. But I can see my own obituary: Science fiction writer Richard Matheson succumbs to ennui. But this labelling hasn't helped my career at all. Not at all. Years ago I wrote a movie on alcoholism for television called *The Morning After*, and it worked beautifully. I was told that it was so definitive that it was shown in medical schools. It was a marvellous study. But the review was written by a reviewer who used words almost like: This is a true horror story, and who better to write the script then.... And I thought: "Oh hell! I'll never get away from it. They don't want you to get out of your category! You try and get out and they smack you on the head and say: 'Get back in there!' God knows what the reviewers are going to say about the television movie I just wrote on the life of L. Frank Baum called *The Dreamer of Oz* – there's not a scare in it!

> "There's been a general deterioration in society – there's no doubt about it. The horror movies are just a reflection of that."

## STEEL COFFIN

**SW: I think I speak for many when saying that your fantasy novels *Bid Time Return* and *What Dreams May Come* are your finest.**

**RM:** It's that *Bid Time Return* is the best book I've written. I've created in a sense a whole society of people. But there was responded not only to the film but to the book the music everything. I feel very good about that. I feel extremely good about *What Dreams May Come* because I've had letters from people saying, 'My mother was dying, and I let her read this book and she faces her death now with peace.' And I think no writer can do more than that. But the critics didn't like it. They wanted me to do horror.

I once gave a speech at a writers' conference on why I hate the genres. Do everything you can to destroy genres. *A good story is a good story.* If you tell a love story and you set it on Mars, then it's a science fiction. You tell it set in the old West, and it becomes a western. You tell it in the midst of a detective story, and it's a detective story. And so on and so forth. This idea that there's this genre that exists like a steel coffin and you've got to jump inside, it's write your story. In many cases, it's not that these writers including Robert Bloch and myself have not attempted other fields. It's just that there's not a welcome mat in these fields and they've got to *birth* their way into it if they're going to do it. And even if they do it, the long-time readers are going to say, 'Aw, gee, why don't you do the old stuff?'

**SW: But marketing labels aside, certainly you can't deny that you're a writer of the fantastic?**

**RM:** Oh sure. On my tombstone they can put 'Fantasy Writer.' I don't mind that. Off Beat Writer. That's fine.

## A FIELD TOO FAR

**SW: When you were writing for *The Twilight Zone* and various other television and movie projects in the early 1960s, with such colleagues as Beaumont and Serling, did you have any idea what effect your work would eventually have?**

**RM:** We enjoyed what we were doing. Certainly we were trying to earn money and support our families, but we were doing it in a way that interested us and in a way that we could do our best. We were pretty good at it. But when I started writing books like *Bid Time Return* and *What Dreams May Come*, a lot of readers in the fantasy, horror and science fiction world thought, 'Well, Matheson's brain has turned to mush.' He doesn't write that nice horror stuff anymore.' Other fields [illegible] are? [laughs] If that's where you want to stay fixated at, that's your privilege.

**SW: Despite the fact that many of the screenplays you've written have never been produced – which is the norm in the film industry – they've apparently always paid other than any novel you've written. You worked for years on a mini-series dealing with the paranormal, but it never got off the ground, and you worked more years on a still unproduced mini-series based on Philip Wylie's *The Disappearance*.**

**RM:** It's hard when you're making a living as a writer and some producer comes to you with something that sounds interesting. You don't say, 'I'm sorry, I think I'm going to be poor this year and write a novel.' And I've never been in that category where millions of dollars have been made available. I [illegible] be ahead of my time, but I'm [illegible] a poor judge of time. I give up fields just before they hit big. Consider that I sold *I Am Legend* for $3000 way back when. But, as my wife keeps reminding me, I was supporting four children, so I really didn't have that much in terms of options. But I look at all these screenplays that never got made, and they're just sitting on the shelf. No one will ever see them. No one has any idea of the wonderful work I did on them.

"I can see my own obituary. 'Science fiction writer Richard Matheson succumbs to ennui.'"

## NO SECRETS

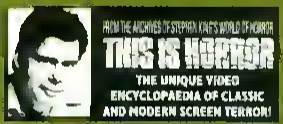
**SW: What advice do you have for the aspiring writer?**

**RM:** If somebody is really intent on being a writer, it doesn't matter what anybody says to them. When I was starting as a writer, people were always saying, 'Well, how long are you going to govern?' and 'When are you going to get a job?' I would just stare at them blankly. It's the ones who send me and other writers letters asking, 'Tell me how to become a writer. Tell me how to get started.' They are the ones who are in trouble. I'm not asked anybody how to get started. I correspondered in the early days with Ray Bradbury, but only to tell him how much I liked his work, and he wrote me back telling me how much he enjoyed my early short stories. But I wasn't asking for advice on how to become a writer.

There is no big secret. Just keep writing. And keep writing about the things you feel strongly about. You should not write anything that doesn't absolutely turn you on. I love writing. It's a hard field. It's very often unrewarding financially – and certainly creatively – for the majority. But if you do love it, great. Stay with it! You should love any field you go into. I love it, and I will stay in it until the day I die.

# THIS IS HORROR!

**FEAR competition**



## *Win a fantastic four-tape video encyclopedia of classic and modern screen terror!*

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The **This is Horror** compilation tapes include interviews with Dario Argento, Brian Yuzna, Joel and Ethan Coen and Robert Bloch, reports from the sets of **Texas Chainsaw Massacre 3** and **Hellbound** and behind the scenes peeks at **A Nightmare on Elm Street 4** and **Re-Animator**. Each tape has an introduction by the master of terror himself, **STEPHEN KING** and lasts for approximately 48 mins.

To win a set of these unique videos we would like you to imagine yourself the compiler of an all-time greats horror encyclopedia. ***What movie would you place at the top of your list, and why?*** Please keep your answer to no more than 25 words in length and send it, along with your name and address, to *This Is Horror Competition, FEAR, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB* to reach us no later than 16 February, 1990. Usual competition rules apply.

When Neil Gaiman told his careers advisor he wanted to write American comics, the man looked like someone had tried to force feed him a herring, and offered accountancy as an alternative. Since then Neil has tackled discouragement his way. Working as a journalist and feature writer for *Today* and *Knave* magazine paid the bills and allowed time to work on prose and comics. His first major comic work for DC was the visually stunning but narratively weak *Black Orchid*.

*Sandman*, a monthly comic, is his most successful project to date. Its design and feel is unorthodox: an omnipotent being creates and guides our dreams, always skirting past yet never fully entering our lives. It is a disturbing idea, but well handled with style and a

**"I don't know what I will do if they ever turn round and say, 'No, you can't do that'"**

wry undercurrent of humour.

The first image I had for the series was of a naked man in a cell for eighty years. Then it spread out from there. I drew the initial design of the characters and sent the drawings to Sam Keith, the artist.

I knew the kind of feel I wanted to have, which wasn't a superhero comic or fantasy or horror. I wanted it to be a walk through the genres, almost charting their history, so that you could keep it through the first eight issues. I liked that idea, and I also wanted to write the comic I wanted to read every month.

## DESTINY

The beginnings of *Sandman* hit home. Despite their obsession with horror, comics have made but a small contribution to the genre's development. They have concentrated on blood spattered pages and the gruesome details of murders in an increasingly desperate attempt to retain the reader's interest.

*Sandman* has altered this approach by introducing an age-old literary technique – character motivation. The most unsettling of the latest batch of issues is number six, in which a superviliain, Dr Destiny, walks quietly in a small town diner. Around him is a cross section of the citizenry – a microcosm of middle America. While Dr Destiny subjects his fellow diners to a series of perverse experiments, Gaiman takes his chance to explore each character. So when each victim meets their fate, the strength of Gaiman's writing ensures that we identify with them.

I don't think horror means anything unless you care. I don't think anything means anything unless you care about people. There is a level at which I like the fact that people got very upset about number six because a lot of people did get very upset. These are the people who will quite casually read books and comics and see movies which have huge death counts and they don't give a fuck. What I wanted to do was say, 'Let's look at the side effects.' We have this supervillain who for a supervillain isn't doing very much. He is just killing a day and killing five people.

I had originally intended the twenty four hours to go over twenty four pages, but I discovered that I couldn't set up the characters, so I took the first six pages to do this, and that was one of the things I enjoyed. For example, the necrophilia page. I don't think that it's particularly horrible. I think it's rather sad. From that page I think you begin to understand people's hidden secrets and sexual kinks slightly better. It's not there for shock value and it's not there to gross people out. It's there for characterisation and because of that it works else to the edge.

Luckily, so far, I haven't been censored even though issue six I think DC looked at it and thought, 'Yes. It's strong. It's over the top. It's probably the nastiest thing we have ever published in any DC comic.' But it's right for the story. It's valid and it makes significant moral points. 'Yes, okay, we'll go for it.'

I don't know what I will do if they ever turn round and say, 'No, you can't do that.' Still, we can burn that bridge when we come to it.

*Sandman*'s central character, Kai'Gul (Sandman), the lord of dreams, proves to be morally bankrupt, suffering from violent mood swings that endanger friends and loved ones.

He can be total bastard. People come up to him and ask, 'Is he good or evil?' From his own perspective, he is good. The mistake people make with him is assuming that he is human, or assuming that he has a human perspective, and all of a sudden, now and then, he will do something and you'll suddenly go, 'No, he isn't.' He has his own set of rules.

## GOOD OMENS

Comic metaphors are fascinating and high profiled area of Neil's career, but they only form part of his output. He is also a talented humourist and the author of *Don't Panic*, a guide to *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, and with Kim Newman, *Ghastly Beyond Belief*, a collection of deceitful SF quotes. Most recently, he completed a collaborative novel with friend and bestselling Disc World author, Terry Pratchett.

The book is called *Good Omens* and it is about heaven and hell, Armageddon, the four motorcyclists of the Apocalypse and the other four motorcyclists of the Apocalypse, the last remnants of the Witchfinder's army. Remember *Witchfinder General*? Well, all we have is a sergeant and a private. The anti-Christ is in it too – his name is Adam Young and he's eleven and so are his friends Pepper, Wensleydale and his dog, who is called Dog. In it you will discover the occult significance of the M25 and why it is that any cassette left in the car for more than two weeks becomes *The Best of Queen*. You will also get to read about the only book of true prophecy ever written. I hope it will be very funny.

It proved to be long distance collaboration. What we are hoping now is that we can sell the book before the telephone bills come in, because most of it was plotted and written over the phone. Then he [Pratchett] and I would go off and write our sections and chapters. We would send computer files back and forth and, when it got to the end of the book and

**"The anti-Christ is in it too – his name is Adam Young and he's eleven"**

things were going on a very immediate basis. We were actually squirting things up and down country by modem.

## MIRACLEMAN

Neil had the initial idea for the book. I started writing it about two years ago. I wrote the first five thousand words and then I thought, 'Hang on, if I write a funny novel having just finished *Don't Panic*, I will be

# COLD COLOURS

**Neil Gaiman has become a comic book writing legend in his own short lifetime with such supersellers as Black Orchid and The Sandman. But here he serves notice that he is not a one medium man. Steve McGinty reports.**

pegged forever as a writer of funny books, which is only one side of what I can do. So I left the book there, having already sent it to Terry.

About eight months ago he rang me up and said that he was sick of doing Dire World novels and. Remember that book you started? Do you we nt to do it big this? So Terry, being frighteningly prolific, took the

**"You will discover the occult significance of the M25 and why any cassette left in the car for more than two weeks becomes *The Best of Queen*"**

first five thousand words and rewrote them, and by the time he was finished they were the first ten thousand words.

What happened was he started doing it because he had a couple of months off, and I had managed to arrange things

**Facing page: photo of Neil Gaiman © Miriam Berkley. This page: extracts from the controversial issue Six of *Sandman***

so that this was my busiest period. I wound up writing the book between two and five in the morning, after I had finished *Sandman*, my new project for DC, *The Book of Magic*, for Eclipse *Miraclemen*.

One danger of collaborating is that one author may overshadow his partner and the reviews then become nasty. This appears not to be the case here. It was very easy and pleasant writing with Terry. We have known each other for years and we have a similar sense of humour. We have, however very different strong and weak points. So I don't think that *Good Omens* will read like a Terry Pratchett book. It also doesn't read like a Neil Gaiman book.

## SCREENBOUND

Gaiman has not ceased to be labelled as a comic book writer. What I like doing is telling stories, putting words together and creating images. I like the whole territory of the fantastic, the whole sense of wonder, but it's a huge world out there and there are all sort of things I haven't written yet. I've never written the fiction on the back of a cornflakes packet, somebody does and it's very important. A lot of people need it in the morning.

Since *Violent Cases*, an atmospheric story about the unreliability of memory, violence and Al Capone's osteopath, which was essentially an illustrated short story rather than a graphic novel, Gaiman has developed the ability to gauge accurately which medium is appropriate to a given subject. What is nice is being able to look at a subject and look at what kind of medium it is best suited for.

I've recently written a book called *Good Omens* which Dave McKean is going to be illustrating, and it is basically a very long poem about the relationship between computers, high finance and black magic. It obviously wasn't a comic, it was a poem, so that is how I wrote it.

My new project for DC, *The Book of Magic*, some of that will be prose, and short stories. I've also recently written a film treatment with Pete Atkins, the screenwriter of *Hellraiser*. That started with a discussion about why I didn't want to write movies, turned into a discussion about what kind of movies I wanted to write, and ended with us sitting together and plotting a movie. It has to be a movie. It couldn't be a novel, it would be terrible, same way it would be a terrible comic, but it would make a great movie. I think that it's a very exciting period to be in films and it's a very exciting period to be a writer.

# THE MAN, THE MYTHS AND THE MODELS

**His startling animation techniques brought the monsters out of the closet and onto the cinema screen. Now Ray Harryhausen's achievements are on show at London's Museum of the Moving Image. FEAR's Stan Nicholls went along for a personal tour of the exhibits, and talked to the man behind the models.**

"It is impossible to assess the career of Ray Harryhausen without reference to his mentor Willis O'Brien. He's the father of the whole shebang," says Harryhausen who saw *King Kong* for the first time at the tender age of thirteen. "In 1933 I innocently walked into Grauman's Chinese Theatre in Hollywood and haven't been the same since."

He has seen the film over a hundred times. "I couldn't resist it. Every time it was released I'd go with two friends, Ray Bradbury and Forry Ackerman, to see it and other Merian Cooper pictures like *She* and *The Last Days of Pompeii*. That was our staple diet, because they had an imagination to them. They weren't the mundane subject matter so prevalent at the time."

*Kong* is still a classic of composite photography and animation. The concept of leading you from the mundane world into the utmost pangs of fantasy is really remarkable because the structure of the script built your credulity into accepting the most fantastic images on the screen.

O'Brien used Gustave Doré as his guide. "If you look, you'll see a lot of *Paradise Lost* and the various other books he illustrated. Doré had a sense of drama in his engravings. A lot of people have forgotten him because the abstract came into fashion and anything representational went out. There's a great deal of Doré in *King Kong* and in *The Most Dangerous Game* as well."

But Harryhausen's interest in fantastic movies started much earlier than *Kong*. In 1923, when I was three or four, my parents took me to see *The Lost World*. Then of course I grew up on pictures like *Metropolis* and there were movies in the silent days I could trace back as influences on my later work."

At school he built three-dimensional models in clay and came to enjoy working with his hands. "I made dioramas of prehistoric scenes," he recalls. "having always admired Charles Knight's restorations of prehistoric life at the American Museum of Natural History in New York."

Inspired by *King Kong*, he saw a way of making his dioramas move. "I took my mother's fur coat, which she kindly donated against her will, and used it to make a furry cave bear with a wooden armature in it. Then I borrowed a 16mm camera from a friend. I was so hypnotised by these models moving by themselves I just kept going on and on. That first primitive experiment finally developed into a profession."

Harryhausen has been approached several times to remake *Kong*, but he has always turned the chance down. "A classic like that shouldn't be remade. The best you could do would be to imitate the original. Nor is he enthusiastic about the recent colourised version. "I couldn't believe it, it's frightening. I heard they are also going to colourise *Mighty Joe Young*. I don't mind them colourising a Laurel and Hardy or a musical. They could be nice coloursed, perhaps. But I think it ruined the whole mystique of *Kong* which, apart from anything else, was fit for black-and-white purposes."

**"Each skeleton had five appendages, and every frame of film you had to move and keep them in synchronisation"**

## DYNAMATION

Harryhausen's first professional breakcame when George Pal made his *Puppetoons* and *Madcap Models* shorts for Paramount. "We turned out six ten minute subjects a year, and I did most of the animation for the early ones." But he had been in touch with Willis O'Brien before that, when he was making *War Eagles*, and found his technique much more interesting than Pal's. "Pal used individual figures to make one step," he points out. "You needed twenty-five separate figures for each movement, and that never appealed to me because it was pre-animation. The process O'Brien developed, where you have a single figure, is much more creative, with one pose leading to the next."

He finally found the courage to show O'Brien some samples of his work, and was taken on as his assistant for *Mighty Joe Young*. To work with him, Merian Cooper and Ernest B Schoedsack, having seen *King Kong* and practically worshipping it to the point of being a fanatic, was a dream come true.

In the event, he ended up doing about eighty-five per cent of the animation on *Mighty Joe*, as O'Brien was so fed up with the technical problems and preparing new setups.

The film won an Oscar in 1947, but this was probably as much in recognition of *Kong*, which had [illegible] before, than was a [illegible] for special effects.

In 1952, Harry Harryhausen directed [illegible] effects for *The Beast From 20 000 Fathoms*, based on a story by Bradbury. From then on each of his features presented problems which stretched him a little further technically, each time. In this one he perfected a technique for combining live action backgrounds with animated models, as back and *Mighty Joe Young* [illegible] the scenery was painted on sheets of glass mounted on a frame. This gave the films a unique quality of mystery and wonder, but was a very expensive process. "We had four matte painters on *Mighty Joe*, for almost a year... and they got a high salary. It cost an enormous amount of money to do it that way."

So I devised a technique which we later called Dynamation, where you split the screen and insert the creature against a realistic background. It avoided building complicated miniature sets or having big glass paintings. It was

This page: Talos the statue of bronze, pursues Jason's men in Jason and the Argonauts. Facing page: The goddess Kali in The Golden Voyage of Sinbad. Both pictures from Ray Harryhausen Film Fantasy Scrapbook

purely for economic reasons but also we had to make these films on a reasonable budget.

## SINBAD REFLOATED

His next project saw the beginning of an association with a producer, which was to last for over twenty years. I met Charles Schneer after *The Beast From 20 000 Fathoms* and he wanted to make a film showing an octopus pulling down the Golden Gate Bridge. That was rested me because of the gigantism. So I went to work with him and we made *It Came From Beneath the Sea*.

When Schneer formed Morningside Pictures he began looking for subject matter and that gave Harryhausen the opportunity to reactivate a project first conceived some years before. I remember in my youth being so disappointed when Douglas Fairbanks Jr played Sinbad alongside Maureen O'Hara. They talked about the roc, they talked about the cyclops, but you never saw them. I wanted to see them! I swore I was going to put the fantasy element on the screen. So after *Mighty Joe Young*, I did some drawings and a ten page outline for *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* and took them all over Hollywood, but nobody wanted to know. None of the producers seemed to have any imagination.

Unfortunately, while I was trying to sell *Seventh Voyage* Howard Hughes released *Son of Sinbad* with Little Sincere and Her Bosom Pals. She was a stripper and they had Dale Robertson who usually played cowboys as Sinbad and Vincent Price as a so-called comedian. That laid a big egg and everybody said costume pictures were out. It wasn't until Charles Schneer realised there was something important in these drawings that we finally made *Seventh Voyage*. The film was brought in for around $650 000 and turned out to be a blockbuster.

## ANIMATED ARGOSY

The technical breakthrough here was that the film was the first Dynamation subject to be shot in colour. Less happily, it fell foul of the British Board of Film Censors which removed the classic skeleton scene and cut half the cyclops sequence.

The skeleton fight in *Seventh Voyage* and the much more ambitious battle in *Jason and the Argonauts* underline the impression that the hardest thing to animate is the human body, if only because we are so familiar with it.

*Seventh Voyage* was followed by *The Three Worlds of Gulliver*, which was originally intended as a musical vehicle for Danny Kaye and later Jack Lemmon. Harryhausen maintains the picture has lost its values but it was not a success. However, it brought him to England, where he was to make the rest of his films. Hollywood didn't have a proper travelling matte process, only the blue backing, which was prohibitively costly. We heard about the yellow backing process here and came over to make *Gulliver* and *Mysterious Island*. We had Rank Laboratories do our processing work, and used yellow backing for both films. We decided to settle in this country and we've been here ever since.

His next production, *Jason and the Argonauts*, seems to be everyone's favourite Harryhausen picture. "I feel it is the most complete, and it pleases me the most. We had to manipulate the story a bit to make it dramatically sound, but it has all the creatures logically built in.

He has been quoted as saying he would have liked the skeleton fight to have taken place at night. Was this an afterthought? "Yes, but we didn't have enough time. It would had been a night. We got an X with the *Seventh Voyage* skeleton as you know, and didn't want to get seven Xs for Jason. I guess it would have been a little more dynamic after night, but then again what is done is done, you can't change it now."

He acknowledges the complexity of the scene in which he had to cope with seven skeletons and three men. Each skeleton had five appendages, and every frame of film you had to move and keep them in synchronisation. You can't just move the arm – you have to move the arm, the body and the head at the same time in order to get a flow. How did he keep track? "You do it by sense, feeling and experience. I would keep a record of the live action, and know that when Jason or whoever swung their sword it would take ten frames, and I had to meet it at that point. But the actual animation I did freehand, without a record."

## SHAGGY DOG STORIES?

The innovation with *One Million Years B.C.* was the use of Cinemascope, which he had some apprehension about. "Some one once said the only use of CinemaScope was to photograph the Last Supper. It was, but my technique is miniature projection, where you are photograph an image that's projected on a little screen behind the animated characters. You can't do that with a long thin picture. I had to redesign the whole movie and make sure of travelling mattes. We had a great deal of travelling mattes in *First Men in the Moon*, which we wouldn't ordinarily use."

*One Million Years B.C.* on the other hand, was a big hit. It also marked a radical departure for Hammer films, though they needed no persuasion. They in fact approached me. I had to do a remake, but on *One Million B.C.* where they used men in dinosaur suits and legs, I saw to it I glued on. I thought I could do much better. So I took it on and worked with Michael Carreras and Anthony Hinds, and we got a script and should in the original.

He refuses the criticism that there is no evidence that men and dinosaurs coexisted. "That's nonsense. The whole essence of fantasy is What If? They still haven't proven beyond doubt that man didn't live in the days of the dinosaurs. There is even the theory that we were planted on this earth by flying saucers. Which isn't so far fetched. It is as reasonable as being fashioned from the dust of the earth – which is symbolic of course.

We are not making documentaries about the world and its vicissitudes, we're making entertainments that will please people for an hour and a half. If you want to combine man with dinosaurs, I see no reason why not. It's a fantasy.

*One Million BC* was not only remake. *The Valley of Gwangi* originally an abandoned Willis O'Brien project, doesn't count, but it was intended as a tribute to O'Brien even though he didn't get a screen credit. He started that in 1942, but it was called off because

"Someone once said the only use of CinemaScope was to photograph the Last Supper"

of the war. They didn't want to invest in a long term picture so they made *Little Orphan Annie* instead.

## DUMMY RUNS

Following (among) Harryhausen returned to the Arabian Nights with *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*, the pictorial which incorporated his interest in the supernatural. "I believe there is a basis for the occult as phenomena we are not acquainted with scientifically. I find it fascinating to put it into film form. For instance the homunculus as seen in *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* is purely an occult concept. Paracelsus was thought to have created a little humanoid figure out of mandrake root and various chemicals. There are all sorts of legends about homunculi. *Devil Doll* was based on that concept. *Bride of Frankenstein* had them and they have always fascinated me.

"But you have to keep magic logical. That's why in *Golden Voyage* Koura the villain had limitations put on his powers. Many films give the magician all kinds to do anything he wants. Well, in the first reel he could kill your hero. So we put restrictions on Koura by making him age every time he used his magic. He had to limit it and it made him human.

*Clash of the Titans* Harryhausen's last and most costly film. Also had the best cast of any of his features including Lord Olivier, Sian Phillips and Burgess Meredith. Previously he had always felt he didn't need big name stars – Our stories were concerned with visuals rather than intellectual acting. Also a lot of actors don't want to take a back seat to special effects. In the same way many actors won't play in a film where there's a child or a dog to steal the scene. To me it would be a challenge. If I were an actor I'd like to try upstaging a dummy!

In any event, to Ray Harryhausen his models are characters as real as any actor and no more than one scene/set they have taken over. There is something about it. It grows like a homunculus. You become fond of it and try to make it as realistic as possible. It's a study in synthetic movement, an exercise in creating artificial life. I have no God complex. But it's a kind of magic. When you see something like Medusa with the snakes writhing in her hair and shooting a bow and rattling in her tail. It gives you the creeps. Because you don't quite know how that was achieved.

## CLEAN CUT

Amongst the projects he intended to make at the time was *Conan*, but I would have been quite different from the film that was finally made.

"I never saw Conan as just a big hulk wandering around slaughtering people. We wanted to make it with more emphasis on the fantastic, rather than the muscle-man elements. He also considered *Food of the Gods* and *The Hobbit*. *Food of the Gods* I would love to have made. I don't think *The Hobbit* was suitable, although a lot of people thought it was for us. On balance it was better as a cartoon than it would have been as a dimensional model animation subject.

Does he keep up with modern fantastic cinema? "I try to. But although techniques have advanced a great deal, I feel the stories have disappeared and been replaced by just a series of happenings.

"In our films we kept the heroes clean-cut. In the Sixties the anti-hero became prevalent and I think that's why we are facing up to

HARRYHAUSEN SCRAPS

**"Who wants to see Jack Nicholson puking on people in church? It's shocking, yes, but I wouldn't call it entertainment"**

crime today. We have no heroes to worship. We need to have a hero and not an anti-hero who beats up old ladies and takes lollipops away from children.

Films are getting more gory. Producers are scraping the bottom of the barrel in order to shock you out of your socks. Actors are even resorting to vomiting on each other. Who wants to see people going to the bathroom? Who wants to see conversations carried out in a urinal? Who wants to see Jack Nicholson puking on people in church? It's shocking, yes, it brings in tickets, but I wouldn't call it entertainment.

I think that one day, when historians tackle this period of history, they will find we are going through another decadent period, what you might call a dark age. Films, being popular culture, reflect and encourage this.

"But we are unlikely to see further contributions to that popular culture from Ray Harryhausen. "I've enjoyed doing films," he says. "It takes too much out of my life. It was a religion with me in a sense and I just can't devote the time any more. I've made seventeen features and I've got to see my family, not spend another two years in a dark room putting a picture together. Then have some critic say, 'Well, it wasn't very good.'

He doesn't regret things he didn't do, projects that never happened? "I did get really everything I wanted to. There are a few things I'd like to do and if the right script came along, maybe I'd fall for it. But I don't know. At the moment I'm doing a lot of travelling to exotic places. I've always wanted to visit, and I enjoy going to conventions and talking to young people. They seem to have a great regard for our films. It's fun discussing them."

**Ray Harryhausen's exhibition Creatures of Fantasy runs at the Museum of the Moving Image until April 1990. His Film Fantasy Scrapbook is published by Titan Books at £8.95.**

Titan Books have repackaged *Ray Harryhausen – Film Fantasy Scrapbook* last seen in 1981 at £8.95. It is basically a collection of black and white film stills and sketches covering all the films he has been involved in, with his own commentary on each enterprise.

Lacking a more comprehensive overview of the master's work, this 142-pager (including eight pages of colour) is worth a look. It's a pity, however, that no one bothered to date the projects clearly!

# ONE MAN'S MEAT

**Cannibal films have a surprisingly prolific history which dates back to the early days of silent cinema But today, betional images of cannibalism are viewed with fear and loathing by the guardians of public decency At what point did the old-fashioned jungle movie turn into a serious threat to morality? In the first of two articles, Julian Petley looks at the most controversial of all the sub-gentres of the horror film**

In the early days of video, long before the Video Recordings Act, Cyclops Video produced a particularly gruesomely packaged tape entitled *Cannibal Holocaust*. The cover promised "The Ultimate Terror Movie" and featured a lurid painting of what purported to be a cannibal with a bloody hunk of human flesh between its teeth. Hardly surprisingly perhaps, *Cannibal Holocaust* was soon the subject of complaints to the Advertising Standards Authority, and by July 1982 this particular video, along with *Drillers Killers*, *Flesh Eaters*, *Crime Death Trap* and *SS Experiment Camp* was being proceeded against by the Director of Public Prosecutions in the first of the famous video nasties cases.

For many people, even honorary fans, *Cannibal Holocaust* (1979 production directed by Ruggero Deodato) was the first indication that there was actually any such thing as a cannibal movie. By the end of the Seventies, of course, flesh-eating zombies had become quite a familiar part of the cinematic scene, thanks mainly to George Romero but this sub-genre bore little resemblance to cannibals.

For horror writers, film-makers and movie-goers alike, zombies are pure creatures of the imagination. But what about cannibals? Might they not still exist in some far flung parts of the world? And doesn't *Cannibal Holocaust* have an uncomfortably documentary look about it? Indeed, couldn't this be an example of the dreaded 'Snuff Movie'?

In fact, although the first cannibal movie proper (*Deep Rouge*, Sergio Martino, 1972) had not been released in cinemas in the UK, several others had already appeared as films here, before the British saw them on the videos of *Cannibal Holocaust*. These were *Prisoner of the Cannibal God* (Sergio Martino, 1978), *Eaten Alive* and *The Last Cannibal World* (both D. Amato, 1977) and *Cannibal Deodato's* 1979 *Jungle Holocaust*. All of these had been heavily cut by the British censor and were not until video came along, (but mark this was censored) that British audiences expected the full horror of what might be called the first Third World cannibal film, perhaps the most controversial of all the sub-genres of the horror movie.

## DARK CONTINENT

[illegible] the early days of the cinema, it was generally assumed that the [illegible] audiences would be uninterested in and [illegible] critics would dismiss all sorts of characters and films with much more respect than the classic films both past and present in particular, they relate very closely to the whole tradition of jungle exotica. The most famous examples of which are the King Kong and Tarzan films.

As Steve Bissette points out in his excellent article on cannibal films in *The Dark Red Horror Handbook* these are firmly rooted in the British and American people's racist adventure genre of the nineteenth and early 20th century, a tradition that began with the publication of the sensational newspaper reports, journals and autobiographies (usually embellished considerably for dramatic impact) that documented the exploration of the dark continents of Africa, South America and Malaysia. Exotic and dangerous locales, fauna and people were combined in pulp novels and comic books (original and genuine) were most terrible, and the illustrations of them the prevalent notions of the white man's supremacy, religion and colonialism. These thrilling accounts of exploration usually involved extreme subjugation and exploitation of the native tribal people and their wildlife.

Little changed as these stories transitioned from pages to screen, and as the white man's burden became the black man's burden. This was Cooper's point in his book *King Kong and the White Man*, and all the genres (jungle films, voodoo films, mad scientist films) were marred by racist racism.

Cannibalism crops up in the cinema as early as 1908 in the Kinetograph comedy *Kate's Holiday*, *Cannibal Island* and in silent films of *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1918) as well as the feature *The Phantom Tribe* (1923) and *Tarzan the Fearless* (1933

[illegible] respected [illegible] Joseph Mankiewicz [illegible] Tennessee Williams [illegible] *Last Summer*, [illegible] humorous visit to the island of Cabeza, with the aliens of a Spanish pagan temple by a gang of beggars and thieves under the guise of [illegible] that actually [illegible] merely was all wed witness the famous fertility dance of [illegible] A similar exemption applied to magazines, which did subtitle, helped to explain the success of the famous *Vale of Cabeza*.

## EXOTICA AND EROTICA

The [illegible] key precursor of the [illegible] cycle sparked off by [illegible] in 1961. This film [illegible] several of its stars [illegible] the brain-child of Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Prosperi. The film was simple a montage of bizarre and sometimes horrific events from around the world, with the accent on exotic [illegible] rituals, [illegible] human beings

**"The cannibals are filthy, grotesque, almost subhuman, and utterly bereft of any redeeming human qualities"**

Top: Pasolini's Pigsty (Porcile). Below: mob violence in Suddenly Last Summer

**Above: Tarzan the Ape Man [1932]. Right: Richard Harris strung up in A Man Called Horse. Below: Africa Addio – as usual animals get the sharp end of the stick.**

and animals alike and, of course, sex. Not unnaturally these films provoked charges of gross voyeurism of travelling in what they purported to condemn, and of blatantly appealing to the lowest common denominator in audiences. More serious criticisms still were laid at the door of one of the most interesting off-shoots of the cycle: *Africa Addio* (1965).

In the early Sixties Jacopetti and Prosperi spent some considerable time in Africa examining the changing, and often violent, face of the continent. The footage they compiled was nothing if not controversial, including several scenes of actual killing. When the film was released, several UN delegates from African countries felt moved to protest, and the directors were accused of, at best not trying to stop some of the horrors they had filmed and, at worst, of actually participating in them. Jacopetti, Prosperi and their spawn are also quite clearly the subject of the 1967 Italian feature *The Savage Eye*, aptly described by *Variety* as "a strange, sometimes exciting but generally disconcerting blend of the-so-near glimpses of a feature-documentary maker at work which at times falls prey to the very footage it wants to attack and debunk, namely the out of context glimpses of exotica and erotica in various lands, or the restaging – with epic exaggeration of sensation-rousing things and events". Ten years later, exactly the same criticism would be levelled at *Cannibal Holocaust*.

A film which was not actually intended to be part of the *Mondo* cycle, but which was distributed and exhibited in such a way as to cash in on it, was *The Sky Above – The Mud Below* (1960), a French documentary epic about a thousand mile journey across the unchanted interior of the former Dutch New Guinea. According to the *Monthly Film Bulletin*, as an account of sustained and exceptional privation, voluntarily endured, the film certainly lives up to its title. Its chief value, however, is geographical and anthropological: it reveals vast landscapes almost untouched by man, and the customs of Stone Age societies of pygmies, cannibals and head-hunters, many of whom had never before seen white people. Far less sensational or voyeuristic than any *Mondo* movie (although let down by a crass commentary), the film does nonetheless prefigure the cannibal genre on account of its setting (the aerial shots of vast tracts of jungle are especially premonitory) and its endurance test aspects.

## TRIBAL RITUALS

Other settings were found and this time which featured the cannibal theme were Fernando Ayala's *Pigsty* (1969), in which a bizarre medieval figure kills and eats travellers in a bleak volcanic landscape, and Don Santos' *How Tasty Was My Little French Girl* (1971), a remarkably Brazilian black comedy set in the sixteenth century, which uses the cannibal theme as a means of making an oblique comment about cultural difference and imperialism. Less serious but undeniably arty (the director Barbet Schroeder had produced films by Jean-Luc Godard and Eric

**'It's one of the genre's unpleasant tricks to place scenes of reel cruelty to animals in the same context as faked cruelty to humans, with the deliberate aim of making the latter seem more 'realistic' by association'**

Rohmer) was *The Valley* (1972) in which to the accompaniment of Pink Floyd soundtrack, a group of chic Parisian bedraggled hippies traverse the wilds of New Guinea in search of a mythical valley paradise. Admittedly there is no actual cannibalism but tribal rituals abound and for all its Shangri La overtones the representation of New Guinea has something distinctly threatening and disturbing about it.

Finally, in this brief excavation of the roots of the Italian Third World cannibal cycle, mention must be made of a Western made in 1970 *A Man Called Horse*, in which Richard Harris, in an absurdly manly-masochistic role, plays an English Lord who is captured by the Sioux and undergoes a series of gruesome, tribal ceremonies in order to become a member of the tribe. Most famous of these is the Sun View ritual in which he is suspended in mid-air from ropes inserted in his chest – a scene which finds an even more grisly and suspect response in *Cannibal Terror* (Umberto Lenzi, 1981) in which a woman captured by cannibals is hung up by her breasts.

If *A Man Called Horse* in many ways an even more gruelling reworking of *The Naked Prey*, then the first true Italian Third World cannibal movie, *Deep River Savages* (Umberto Lenzi, 1972) is really a remake of *A Man Called Horse*. The story (an English explorer and photographer, Bradley, who is captured by a tribe living on the contemporary Thailand/Burma border, is tortured and finally eventually adopted by them (after of course various unpleasant events involving man's nature versus Rousseau and Me My Lady, both of which were to become regular features of the genre) has the direct, if less significant, that Bradley saved a photographer who both looks back to the *Mondo* cycle and forward to the rest of the cannibal genre in which as we shall see, reporters, journalists and filmmakers absolutely abound.

## UNPLEASANT TRICKS

Mario Lenzi pushes *Deep River Savages* – more all that has gone before, however (and it is certainly [illegible] which is dull and predictable in the numerous [illegible] simulated cruelty to animals and the ferocity (phony, of course, simulated) of the savages, including cannibalism – human beings. The films' synopsis invariably states that you will sight some of the rites and customs shown are perhaps genuine, they are portrayed as they very usually carried out. However, in fact, most the genre's unpleasant tricks to place scenes of real cruelty to animals in its same [illegible] taken cruelty to humans with the deliberate aim of making the latter seem more realistic by

[illegible] being forced to eat raw dog [illegible] sexual sex in the ashes of his [illegible] funeral pyre, whilst [illegible] tribesmen include a double [illegible] snake and a monkey having the [illegible] shoved up and [illegible] and eaten, a snake cut in half and the skinning of a live crocodile.

Given all this brutality, realism, taked it comes as no little surprise to learn some twenty minutes into the film that Bradley is not actually in the clutches of cannibals at all and that these live further up the river. Frequently horrifying Bradley's captors, Dr. Nobly the cannibals eventually spare killing and eating, in of the female members of the tribe, and finally setting fire to the whole village. In fact, the scenes of cannibalism are pretty brief. It gruesome and filmed in a particularly dull, flat manner, but they decisively set the pattern for later films in the genre (indeed Lenzi himself re-used them in *Eaten Alive* 1980).

The cannibals are filthy, grotesque, almost sub-human and utterly bereft of any redeeming human qualities, they seem to lack even a language. In other words they are what in previous times would have been called savages. This genre's sexual racism is underlined by Bradley's remark to Me Me Lai (who plays the tribeswoman he marries) that you think you know me, but you haven't yet learned what love means, by his stalling his new-born son's little black savage and of course, by the very title of the film itself. It's also with pointing out in the light of the following films that there is already apparent here an unpleasantly sexual quality to the scenes of cannibalism, not only is the victim a woman, but we also see her breast being sliced off and eaten. The fact that the whole enterprise is spiced up with soft core sex scenes of Rassimov and Lai romping in the jungle serves only to make it all the more distasteful and dubious. But this too is a portent of things to come (most notably in *Emanuelle and the Last Cannibals* – Joe D'Amato 1977). However, what *Deep River Savages* does not prepare us for is just how effectively the genre can be in the hands of a director such as Ruggero Deodato.

Before we go on to look at his work and other examples of the genre in the next issue, it is important to note that the cycle was also helped into life by a real life incide ice of cannibalism. This occurred in the Andes in 1972 when the survivors of an air crash were forced to live off the flesh of the dead until they were eventually rescued. Almost immediately a film was made out of this event (although in Mexico not in Italy). This was *Survive* (1976) by exploitation hack Rene Cardona Sr. The same year Deodato made *Cannibal* which, as we shall see, took the nascent genre to new heights and depths, depending on your point of view.

**"There is already apparent here an unpleasantly sexual quality to the scenes of cannibalism"**

FEAR EXCLUSIVE

# MEMOIRS FOR A SPACE AGE

**J G Ballard is one of the most highly acclaimed authors of our age. In work spanning SF, fantasy, horror and reality he charts the course of our short histories, but portrays characters and situations that belong to all times and places. In this, the first instalment of a rare two-part interview, he talks to David Pringle about the science, mysticism and politics behind his fictions**

James Graham Ballard (born 15 November 1930 in Shanghai, China) is one of the best known British SF writers – and is also celebrated for his war novel *Empire of the Sun* (1984), filmed two years ago by Steven Spielberg. His most recent books are the novel *The Day of Creation* (Gollancz, 1987), about a man who becomes obsessed with a newly sprung river in Central Africa, and the novella *Running Wild* (Hutchinson, 1988), which concerns a shocking Thames Valley massacre. Ballard has also recently published a collection of short stories called *Memories of the Space Age* (Arkham House), atmospheric tales of an abandoned Cape Canaveral in the near future.

## HORROR HAS A PLACE

**DP: Have you read any modern horror – Stephen King, for example?**

**JGB:** I enjoyed Clive Barker's *Weaveworld*. He gave me a copy and it was a pleasure to read.

**"I know nothing about the world of horror. My reading of horror fiction is strictly Edgar Allan Poe and W W Jacobs and Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde"**

He's an engaging, lively character. I liked him enormously – very lucid and intelligent and *simpatico*. But I'm afraid, apart from the Barker, I've read almost nothing. No, I haven't read Stephen King, though I enjoyed the TV movie of *Salem's Lot*. I thought that was well done, but then I enjoyed the *Omen* films too. I know nothing about the world of horror. My reading of horror fiction is strictly Edgar Allan Poe and W W Jacobs and Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.

**DP: Would you consider yourself a writer of horror stories?**

**JGB:** You could say *Crash* is on the edges of horror fiction. I take it that in horror fiction the horrific effects are the object of the exercise. In the Gothic novel the clanking chains and creaking drawbridges and whistling pendulums are the object, the chill of terror and fear is the whole purpose. Whereas in a book like *Crash* I'm not out to make the blood run cold. I'm trying to look at the eroticism of the car crash and the way modern technology has infiltrated our minds, taken over a large part of our imaginations and created a world of very different values.

I've never thought of myself as a writer of horror. When you're dealing with a sensational subject matter where you're showing radical changes with people making sudden discoveries about the reality of their lives in dramatic circumstances, where people are being plagued by intense mental crises (as they are in a lot of my fiction), you're getting into an area close to horror fiction. The main props of the classic tale of terror were haunted castles and alike. The present day equivalents of haunted castles are psychiatric hospitals. The blade-tipped pendulum has given way to the scalpel in the neurosurgeon's fingers. It's not the evil potion in a dusty bell jar that frightens us now. It's the contents of the hypodermic syringe, and the needle that may not be too clean. The props have changed. There are sudden glimpses of the shocking and unspeakable in my fiction too, so there is a certain overlap.

## WARP FACTOR

**DP: You once wanted to be a doctor. How has that affected your imagination?**

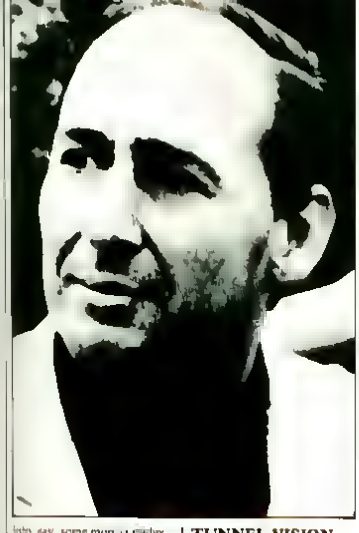
**JGB:** My interest in medicine runs through all my fiction. I make use of the medical studies I did as a way of trying to get at the truth about our physical selves and our mental behaviour. I intended originally to be a psychiatrist. We all have a very conventionalised view of our own bodies and minds, and yet we are entirely the creatures of our central nervous systems. Most novelists describe characters exclusively in terms of their sensibilities, their highest levels of consciousness, their social relationships and attitudes, but I think it's important to try and see all this within a larger frame – the frame of the central nervous system which can reflect the real sources of human behaviour far more accurately than the social chit-chat you get in mainstream fiction.

I take the standpoint of modern neuro-science: the world that presents itself to our senses – this room, the streets we drive down – is in fact a ramshackle construct that our brains have devised to allow us

**"The present day aquivelents of haunted castles are psychiatric hospitals; the blada-tipped pendulum has given way to the scalpel in the neurosurgeon's fingers"**

to move around more or less successfully in our tasks of maintaining ourselves and reproducing our species. One needs to dismantle this ramshackle construct in order to understand what is actually going on. The apparent visual space we occupy does not actually coincide with the optical reality. The brain warps a large part of the data that strikes the retina. For example, shadows are in reality far deeper than they appear to us: the brain softens out the sharp contrasts that exist between light and dark spaces in order to be able to analyse the physical environment more clearly – otherwise it would be a mass of zebra stripes. Our consciousness is an elaborate artifact constructed by the central nervous system to make both the internal and external environments negotiable. These are complex neuro-psychological devices, and one needs to analyse them. Insofar as it is possible to do by the imagination, to try and grasp what is going on.

In my stories *Myths of the Near Future*, *Memories of the Space Age* and *News From the Sun*, I was doing just that, analysing what our sense of time plays for us. It may be that time is a neuro-psychological structure we've inherited from the distant past, along with other no longer needed organs, like the appendix and the little toe. We are to some extent trapped by this archaic structure of our day-to-day sense of time, which limits our perception of a much larger world. Once we get away from our sense of serial time



into say some more complex notion of time – time perceived as a simultaneity – we are beginning to reach the threshold of a larger mental consciousness of the kind that's perceived by mystics and by ordinary people during moments of revelation or at times of great crisis as in say near death experiences I take that standpoint and I try to

**"It's not the evil potion in a dusty bell-jar that frightens us now, it's the contents of the hypodermic syringe, and the needle that may not be too clean"**

pursue it in my fiction – even in something like this novella that's just come out *Running Wild* There I m looking at the behaviour of these brainwashed children as a group of laboratory specimens exposed (if you like) to sensory deprivation My interest in medicine and the sciences is largely because I see them as the best tools for dismantling conventionalised reality

## TUNNEL VISION

**DP Are you interested in near death experiences?**

JGB I've never undergone one though everybody who has suffered from nightmares or been through periods of fever has had experiences slightly similar All I know is what I've read Recently in *New Scientist* there was a fascinating article on the neuro-psychological basis of near death experiences and why people going through them seem to pass through tunnels It was explained on the basis of the fading input of visual data to the optical cortex, and the way the desperate brain slightly deprived of oxygen is scanning its collapsing field of vision and then generating from this faltering stream of data its own illusionist space to compensate The brain tends to construct out of concentrings of cells in the visual cortex the illusion of a tunnel and so on.

Various other aspects of the visual phenomena the apparent distance of the dying person from himself can all be explained in neuro-psychological terms Under extreme pressure the various centres in the brain which organise a coherent view of the world begin to break down If they're being starved of input they begin to construct these artificial structures or entities – out of which come our very extraordinary visions of heaven and hell and almost everything else besides So many of our most moving experiences – emotional visionary religious can be attributed to that

## FALL OF AN EMPIRE

DP Did the Spielberg film of *Empire of the Sun* bring any more complaints from those women who were in Lunghua camp at the same time as you and who were unhappy with your account in the book?

JGB They printed about the film but many of them were even younger than I was at the time Western entrepreneurs – bankers businessmen and manufacturers – built Shanghai which became a vast metropolis By the 1930s it had a population of about five million which made it one of the largest

**"Our consciousness is an elaborate artifact constructed by the central nervous system to make both the internal and external environments negotiable"**

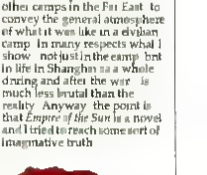
cities in the world and a magnet to millions of poverty stricken people fleeing the wars and famines of China

Tens of thousands of peasants and members of the Shanghai working class perished every year They died in droves from malnutrition from untreated cholera smallpox typhoid Every day a fleet of trucks would tour the city collecting the bodies of people who were lying dead in the street. When I went to school as a boy I would regularly pass bodies in the gutter I would see coffins decked with flowers these small coffins which would hold a dead child Now the Westerners – my parents included – who created the city left no responsibility for these things Remember there was no welfare state no dole no national health service If you fell to the Shanghai sidewalks to a faint from hunger you d lie there until you died It was the most brutal and cruel city – as well as being an extraordinarily vital and exciting place

The downside was this Darwinian struggle to survive that my parents generation felt absolutely no responsibility for And of course any criticism you make of it immediately comes up against the sort of reactions that these ladies have displayed What on earth is he talking about? We were not responsible for this But they or people like them created the situation in which these appalling events took place I was brought up in a world to do Western enclave which enjoyed an enormously high standard of living cheek to jowl with appalling poverty and suffering I was aware of the irony then as a boy My parents and all the European and American adults had completely closed their eyes to reality But Shanghai was created by the West So all these people take a very dim view of my apparent criticisms of the British

**DP To be fair they're not so much talking about the situation in Shanghai, but of your treatment of the camp they say you've exaggerated that**

JGB I m not so sure What I did was conflate the experiences of my own camp with those of other camps in the Far East to convey the general atmosphere of what it was like in a civilian camp In many respects what I show not just in the camp but in life in Shanghai as a whole during and after the war is much less brutal than the reality Anyway the point is that *Empire of the Sun* is a novel and I tried to reach some sort of imaginative truth



Just as Robert Bloch seems to be best known as the author of *Psycho*, so Richard Laymon looks set to find himself tagged as the author of *The Cellar*. Still, that's not a bad thing: when it was published nearly a decade ago, Laymon's first novel sold over 300,000 copies in the United States alone.

The man who created all manner of horrors for his fictional *Beast House* fame came in for an amount of flak for the books' pedantry, bestiality and, of course, 'a certain peculiarity of the creature's anatomy' is finally poised to enter the big league alongside such writers as his close friend Dean R Koontz. But Richard Laymon has had to work long and hard to reach this prestigious position. Through no fault of his own, his literary career stumbled and nearly collapsed after the runaway success of *The Cellar* in 1980. Now, however, he's back – and on top form too.

> 'I am very tired of old, tacky amusement parks. I find them sleazy, spooky and exciting.'

Richard Carl Laymon was born in Chicago, Illinois, on 14 January 1947. 'I seem to be the exception to the rule that writers have miserable childhoods,' he says. 'I grew up in a suburb with terrific parents and an older brother named Bob who didn't spend all his time tormenting me, and a dog named Laddie who ate a light bulb when he was a puppy and survived it – which was, I suppose, my first experience of gore!'

Laymon always wanted to write, and made his first attempts at fiction when just seven or eight years old. 'I used to write novels in secret after school,' he confesses. 'I was about eleven or so when my first effort, a poem, was published in a school magazine. It was a Kipling imitation about a sailor who ran into all kinds of trouble but never lost his head – until he was ship-wrecked on a desert island and met the natives, that was. Then he lost his head – quite literally!'

## THE CELLARMAN

As a teenager at Kedwood High School in Larkspur, California, Richard took creative writing courses and garnered his first rejection slip with a vignette about a soldier getting killed by a sniper in Flanders fields. It was modelled on Hemingway's *In Our Time*. Laymon recalls, which in no surprise, since Hemingway was probably the biggest influence on my writing career.'

Richard's education led to an MA in English Literature from Loyola University, Los Angeles, and a lifetime teaching certificate for English and Library Science. In his spare time, however, he was beginning to make the first of many short fiction sales to magazines such as *Ellery Queen*, *Alfred Hitchcock*, *Mike Shayne*, *Cavalier* and *Gallery*.

After one year in his first job, attempting to teach English to ninth grade hoodlums at a Catholic girls school in downtown LA, he moved into become a library assistant at Mount St Mary's College and later John Adams Junior High School in Santa Monica.

It was while working as Head Librarian at John Adams that he wrote and sold *The Cellar*. Although his previous stories had all been mysteries, horror had been a dominant influence on his work ever since his parents allowed him to stay up late one night to watch Boris Karloff in *Frankenstein*.

In any case,' Laymon continues, crime and horror often have similar plot structure. Mayhem has been committed, the protagonists find themselves in jeopardy, after chases, narrow escapes and assorted blood-lettings, the perpetrator is identified and stopped just in time to bring about a sometimes cheery ending. In my own case, I frequently use policemen as main characters. This seems natural to me since cops are the people who would most logically have to deal with problems involving violent death.

Another reason why Laymon's books generally stick to this formula is that the author is not overly fond of the occult and supernatural plot devices. 'I prefer to keep things more down-to-earth. Oh sure, I've employed a number of benign and black magic curses, but most of my stories actually focus on the adventures of rather screwy, malevolent Americans and the tremors they begin to visit upon my protagonists.'

## LIGHTS OUT

Inspired by *The Cellar* a success, Laymon quit work to write full time. 'A job is always an obstacle necessity for a writer. If he can make ends meet by writing, he's wasting his time working for other people. Of course, it's a gamble, and in my case it resulted in a couple of years of hard times, but certainly don't regret it. I got to spend four years at home with my wife Ann and my daughter Kelly, and wrote a lot of books which are now paying off.'

However, his next 'nasty' novel *The Woods Are Dark* (1983) failed to enjoy the success of its predecessor. 'The cover that my American publisher, Warner Books, put on *Woods* didn't really do much to make people reach out and buy it. I mean, based on the cover, even I wouldn't have bought it.'

As the book didn't sell well his following novel *Out Are the Lights* (1982) received poor distribution and thereafter he found himself in the curious position of being an American author writing American horror stories which, though selling well in England and France, weren't being published in America.

Laymon managed to pay the bills by selling another suspense novel aimed at young adults, *Nightman, Lake* (again under the Carl Laymon pseudonym). He even penned a western for Dell

# KEEP THE CAMPFIRES BURNING

**Horror is the forerunner of all types of fiction, according to author Richard Laymon. Primitive tribes people gathered around camp fires to tell tales of evil spirits, carnivorous creatures and violent death. Now the author of The Cellar, Flesh and the recently released Funhouse tosses another log onto the flames for FEAR's David Whitehead.**

books *Making America* saga. *The Lawmen* was published under the house name of Lee Davis Willoughby

## CLASSIC LITERATURE

Despite these occasional departures from style and theme, however, Laymon was always pleased to get back to horror. "I've never really had the urge to write anything else. I guess I'm just drawn to the genre. Some people think of the horror story as cheap, lowbrow and British entertainment – the lowest form of literature – but I believe the opposite to be true. In fact, I think it quite likely that all literature is descended from the horror story. After all, the very first yarns told around campfires long before man could write were probably stories of monsters, evil spirits,

**"I've employed a number of beasts and black magic curses, but most of my stories actually focus on the adventures of rather screwy, malevolent humans"**

encounters with the living dead and various other things that go bump in the night. Such tales are told even today.

Anyone who doubts the primacy of horror as a literary form needs only to read the classics of English Literature – Beowulf, Chaucer and Shakespeare for starters. They're loaded with beasts, ghosts, witches and gore.

So, indeed, were Laymon's next few books. *Night Show* (1984), *Beware! Allhallow's Eve* (both 1985), and a sequel to *The Cellar* entitled *The Beast House* (1986), which all saw first publication in Europe.

After four years as a full-time

**"Anyone who doubts the primacy of horror as a literary form needs only to read the classics of English Literature – Beowulf, Chaucer and Shakespeare for starters"**

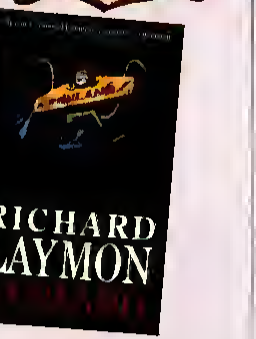
writer, Laymon regretfully went back to work as an office temp, and it was while writing reports for a law firm specialising in personal injury defence work that Tor gave him another chance to crack the American market by punching out *Night Show* and *Dead Sorby* (1987, published in the UK under the pseudonym Richard Kelly).

The timing could not have been better, for the third book in Laymon's comeback was to prove his strongest to date. In fact, *Flesh* (1987), a chilling tale of cannibalism not dissimilar to David Cronenberg's 1975 film *Shivers*, was so highly regarded that the *Science Fiction Chronicle* named it Best Horror Novel of 1988 and the Horror Writers of America nominated it for the prestigious Bram Stoker Award.

## TROLLING

Laymon's biggest strength is that he is able to provide lighthearted fun *and* disturb at the same time – as his next Richard Kelly novel, *The Midnight Love* and *Resurrection Dreams* (both 1988) amply testify.

His latest book, *Funland* is all the more disturbing because it has its basis in fact. Santa Cruz is a rather seedy community on the California coast south of San Francisco. Along one of its beaches is a boardwalk with an old, tacky amusement park. Now, I am very fond of old tacky amusement parks. I find them sleazy, spunky and exciting. But when I visited Santa Cruz several years ago with my wife and daughter, we were constantly being confronted by filthy, crazed beggars. They seemed to be




everywhere. The citizens there called them trolls.

Laymon's wife found a newspaper clipping which brought the so-called sport of trolling to his attention.

Apparently groups of teenagers were stalking these derelicts at night, beating them up and giving them rides out of town. And while some citizens denounced the practice, many more actually seemed to *appreciate* it. I mean, we actually saw signs condemning trolls and applauding the efforts of the trollers!

Laymon is quick to stress that Soleta Bay, the fictional setting for *Funland*'s gruesome action, is not based upon Santa Cruz, but it remains a matter of public record that a form of trolling did take place there when he made his first visit. And even more unsettling is the fact that on his last return trip to the coast, I didn't see a single troll

## OUT OF THE BAG

Normally, Laymon writes about two and a half books each year, but because of various other commitments (including *Night Visions 7*, in which he shares space with Gary Brandner and Chet Williamson) his new novel, *The Stake*, took up the best part of a year.

*The Stake* is about a horror writer who discovers the withered body of a young woman with a stake through her heart. Someone apparently thought she was a vampire, Richard muses. But is she?

His UK publisher, W H Allen, purchased *The Stake* for a high five figure sum, and no less than three publishing houses made bids for it when it went up for auction in America.

Laymon is slightly less willing to discuss his current project, which is known only as "Untitled", but he is much more specific about his future beyond that. "I want to continue giving my readers nightmares. Or at the very least a little chill. If possible, I want to keep them worried about what might be peering in at the window while they read."

A writer does not need to step outside the horror field in order to deal with any aspect of the human condition. A horror novel is like a big bag. Maybe it

**"I want to continue giving my readers nightmares. Or at the very least a little chill"**

has a skull printed on the outside, but inside the bag is empty. The writer can stuff into it whatever he likes.

I've never written a post-apocalyptic novel. The subject seems too dreary for my kind of fictional fare. But I know one thing for certain about those who survive the fall of civilisation. After the day is done, in the time before sleep comes, stories will be told around the dwindling cookfires. But they won't be love stories, or whodunnits, or westerns, or stories about space travel. Oh no! A maniacal glint comes into Richard Laymon's eyes. "They'll be stories of monsters and demons," he concludes, "and things that go bump in the night."

## ABANDON REALITY

The world's first visionary fantasy art gallery, Abandon Art, is open and showing a range of work from big name artists.

Set up by Games Workshop co-founder Steve Jackson, Abandon Art's first exhibition features the fantastic dream world of Frank Wu, other fine thematic illustrations by Chris Achilleos and pieces of fantasy art from Jim Burns, together with other superb work from Roger Dean, Martin Garland, Ian Miller, Les Edwards, John Blanche, Ian McCaig and Terry Oakes.

The gallery is run by Catherine Outten and can be found at 16 King Street, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1ND. For [illegible] information you can [illegible]

## STOP PRESS

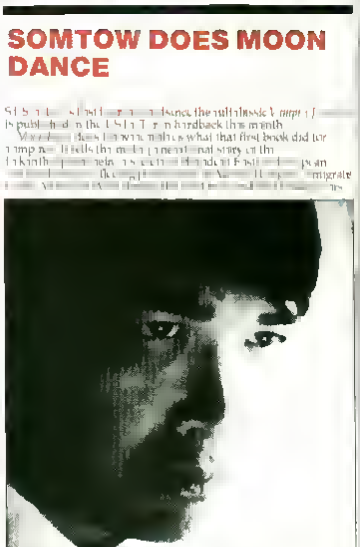
When [illegible] the Texas Chainsaw Massacre, Suspiria, Cannibal [illegible] it's [illegible] that

## MEET THE MOVIE MAGICIANS

Leading British expert Christopher Smith summarises the development of 3D products and techniques from 1950 to the present in an interview at the Museum of the Moving Image, South Bank, London, at 8pm on 31 January. To illustrate the 3D promises and pitfalls, their will be a screening of Jaws 3-D. With the story on a mind-boggling [illegible] MOMI [illegible] 3535.

## SOMTOW DOES MOON DANCE

S P Somtow's [illegible] dance the full tissue version of [illegible] is published in the USA in hardback this month. [illegible] is what that first book did for vampires. It tells the multi-generational story of the Lokanthi [illegible] in a world of Indian Festivals, [illegible] corporate [illegible]



S P Somtow

[illegible] Kilhi [illegible] Chogg[illegible] and the shiva hangings [illegible] dance the [illegible] Lokanthi. The [illegible] A British publisher [illegible] pick up [illegible] that [illegible] for [illegible] through [illegible] special ships [illegible] Britain.

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Brian Lumley

# NECROSCOPE SAGA CONTINUES

Brian Lumley's [illegible] Necroscope series is rapidly becoming one of the most [illegible] successful horror novelists.

His next book, *Deadspeak* [illegible] the saga of the vampiric Wamphyri. The story [illegible] Harry Keogh's war with the Wamphyri he loves his gift and is reluctant to [illegible] the dead who warn him that James Forrestal is [illegible] and black magician is resurrected and about to unleash his curse upon the world. Both of his powers, Harry must fight James to lose everything he loves and death.

*Deadspeak* will be published by Tor Paperbacks [illegible] August September and will be available from Griffin [illegible]

# CALAMITY CORNERED

Calamity Comics, [illegible] Hanworth Road, Middlesex, have [illegible] make them most [illegible] in Station Road due to [illegible] problems. The shop manager is apologise and [illegible] information [illegible] 427 3834.

# BLACK SUNDAY UPDATE

Northern film festival Black Sunday continues to build its impressive repertoire of [illegible] Organise Mark [illegible] Dog which has added [illegible] already [illegible] which include Anthony [illegible] and [illegible]

The Film is being [illegible] February [illegible] venues in Manchester including [illegible] Tickets [illegible] available from [illegible] Tonight [illegible] Whitefields, Manchester M25 6BW.

# MORE HAUNTED VISIONS

[illegible] and author Lillian Webb [illegible] Haunted Visions [illegible] Published [illegible] discusses [illegible] painting [illegible] but [illegible] that [illegible] and [illegible] (£5) 8 Brighton [illegible] Centre, Manhattan, New York 11934 USA. [illegible] from Castle [illegible] Queen Square, London [illegible] ARN.

# UNION HACK

## NO TO HELLGATE!

**Our review and the ad for New World Video's *Hellgate* has caused a stir; in short, politics rears its ugly head, and FEAR has been asked to print the following statement. The facts below were news to us, and should be news to you...**

TO THE READERS OF FEAR,
FROM IMAGE ANIMATION PLC

Following the recent press campaign and various misinformed reviews of the film *Hellgate*, I would like you to know that Image Animation PLC had nothing to do with the creation of the make-up or visual effects on this production.

When *Hellgate* was offered to us a large section of the crew including myself, did not want to work on it as the film was to shoot in South Africa and our political views regarding apartheid made it impossible for us to even consider working on this film. A report on the *Media Show* last year and an editorial by John Gilbert served to highlight the poor conditions under which the largely non white crew were working, justification of any work needed to stand. It was decided then, by the directors of IA, that the company would have no involvement with this production.

However some personnel who have worked for Image Animation on both *Hellraiser* and *Hellbound* did work on this film, setting up their own effects unit in another private workshop. It appears to be they who have been getting this rather mis directed credit.

With the film a release on video we have been seeing the full-page ads like the one in FEAR which, although the wording is in one sense correct, are deliberately misleading and could, we feel, damage Image Animation's good name or even the personal reputations of those members of the crew who chose not to work on *Hellgate*.

The producers of *Hellgate* have already been contacted regarding this flagrant misuse of our previous credits and we will be contacting our lawyers regarding this latest incident.


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# HOLLYWOOD – THE FINAL FINANCIAL FRONTIER

*FEAR's American correspondent Philip Nutman weighs up the sale of the Hollywood studios and their effect on the independents and reports on the latest developments in the phenomenally busy career of Richard Christian Matheson*

**DATELINE New York City December 1989**

The Sony Corporation's buy out of Columbia Pictures for roughly three quarters of a billion dollars on 26 November last year will have serious repercussions for the industry as a whole. The $200 million Sony paid for *Batman* producers Peter Guber's and Jon Peters' production company Guber Peters Entertainment (part of the deal was to install the mavericks as studio heads) has left all other studio heads feeling insignificant. The result? Higher executive costs and higher rates for top directors, writers and actors. The bottom line? Production costs will soar and the disparity between independent low budget pictures and even mid level studio movies will widen. In the face of such a situation is there any hope for the independents other than video?

The reason why the Japs paid so much for Columbia (one of Hollywood's last successful studios in simple everyone wants a slice of the Tinseltown pie, which has grown to gigantic proportions over the last ten years. 1988 saw a box office record of $4.25 billion. According to the *New York Times* by late November, box office grosses were running over $500 billion.

All of this great news for the Gubers and Peters of the business, and even for the lowest paid studio executive. But it means novice directors and writers who have to cut their teeth in the independent sector will have less of a chance to prove themselves in the face of such competition. And this is also true of the situation in publishing.

With advances reaching millions propositions (eg the $5 million paid to Thomas Harris for his next two books) it's one thing that first time novelists have, little chance of achieving respectable sales as they have no back list to support them and little money for promotion. If a publisher pays an advance of £75,000 for a book, then at least the same again will be spent on promotion. For a company to break even the book must then sell at least 100,000 copies. As an insider at W H Allen was recently quoted as saying: "The differences between lead titles and mid list books is astronomic. Most mid list books are lucky if they sell around 3,000 copies, as all efforts are being concentrated on the leads. Before money mania gripped the entertainment industry publishers played a waiting game, allowing authors to build up a steady following with each successive book. Now everyone wants overnight success to mean sums in the region of £175,000."

## BOOK OF THE DEAD 2

After years of being told that anthologies don't sell, 1989 saw the publication of more short story collections than any other year. New 1990-91 is shaping up to be an even richer harvest for the lover of short fiction with at least twelve collections already in the works and several others waiting in the wings.

One of last year's most successful anthologies was the Skipp & Spector-edited zombie volume *Book of the Dead*, which sold out most of its 125,000 print run within a couple of months of publication.

Consequently, *Book of the Dead 2* is currently in the works and according to John Skipp the response has been overwhelming.

When Craig and I first came up with the idea back in 1987 we were delighted with the immediate reaction we got. George A Romero was sceptical about the project (Romero did the introduction to the book) but it seemed everyone had a zombie story they wanted to tell. But since we put out the word on *Book of the Dead 2* things have got crazy. Clive (Barker) has said he really wants to do a story for us. Mick Garris is currently working on one. Cathan Wilson wants to do one. Richard Christian Matheson's promised us a new tale – a whole bunch of people. So far we've got a totally wired story from Marc Arnold, who wrote *Fright Night* to the Cathedral for Dave Schow's *Silver Scream* anthology, a really great story from Elizabeth Massie, and a nasty one about sex, drugs and zombie snuff cults from Nancy Collins, who wrote the vampire novel *Sunglasses After Dark*.

Arnold's *Silver Scream* contribution was one of that volume's wildest tales and Skipp has high praise for the writer. Marc's *Book of the Dead* story poses some editorial problems because there are so many great ideas flying around in there. He's got this amazing talent for filling his short stories with more concepts than you usually find in a novel.

Other potential contributors include Angela Carter, Thomas Harris, Dean Koontz and Dennis Etchison.

Books being assembled at the moment include *Hot Blood 2* (Jeff Gelb), *Boardwalk 1 and 2* (Thomas F Monteleone), *Dangerous Women* and *Blood Is Not Enough* 2 (Ellen Datlow), *After the Darkness* (Stanley Wiater), *Darklands* (Nicholas Royle), *Victims In Viscera* (David Khulen – title undergoing change), *Splatterpunks* (Paul M Sammon), an as yet untitled collection of Christmas ghost stories (Kathryn Kramer), *Obsessions* (Gary L Raisor), *Women of Darkness 2* (Kathryn Ptacharik), *Blood and Roses* (Lisa Feenick) and three comic book related anthologies from Bantam featuring Superman, Wonder Woman and the Joker (Martin H Greenberg) which are companion volumes to their successful *New Adventures of Batman* book.

Add to this list further volumes of Dark Harvest's popular *Night Visions* series and no less than three Joe R Lansdale collections from Mark Zeising and the market place

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stories to look crowded.

Of the collections listed FEAR contributor Stanley Wiater promises to be unusual. Wiater eschews the typical anthology format by replacing introductions to the stories with afterwards in the form of interviews with each contributor detailing how they came to write their tales.

## WORKS IN PROGRESS

Tom Holland, Richard Christian Matheson has been busy since we profiled him in FEAR. It's a huge understatement. In 1990/91 he will be working on the following: a novel, a second short story collection plus four feature film scripts in various stages of development. He is also scheduled to write at least two other screenplays, anthologies and develop three TV series which have now been sold to the networks. He restructured some of the plots for two films, so working on a film was shelved with his father the legendary Richard Matheson and will see the publication of eight new short stories in some of the anthologies mentioned elsewhere in this column. Lastly, he is due to work with Steven Spielberg on another film following their collaboration on Phil Joanou's debut movie *Three O Clock High* (now available on video here and recommended).

We finally managed to catch up with Richard and asked him to explain whether he is A – a workaholic, B – crazy, C – destined for an early grave or D – all three.

According to Matheson "Basically, I've always found it possible to deal with several projects at once without any of them appearing to suffer. But, with the way things are headed, I think I will need to slow down a little as some of them are going to be pretty demanding. The answer to how can I handle so much is simple: the imagination is like a muscle – the more I work out the stronger it gets. The more I do, the more I find I can do. But obviously, you reach a point where you have to draw the line. I think I've now reached that point.

Of all the projects he is currently working on, the one he seems most pleased about is his forthcoming novel, due to be published by Bantam/Doubleday/Dell in the early spring of 1991. The book (the title of which he will not divulge as he says it will give away the central conceit) is a satirical horror fantasy about a show business set in Hollywood.

The best way to describe it is as a mixture of Kurt Vonnegut and Franz Kafka, and stylistically it is akin to the Magical Realism of Borges and other South American writers. Maybe I should change my name to Jorge Luis Matheson or Richard Marquez. He jokes.

Seriously, though, it's exciting to be writing an extended prose work.

It's surprising that Matheson has taken so long to get around to a novel considering his father's prolific output and the fact that the younger Matheson has been earning a living writing in one form or another since his late teens. He started out penning and selling gags to stand-up comics when he was 19 years old. Television is the answer to that, he explains. When I first got involved with the business I was suddenly presented with a lot of opportunities. I had the chance to work on so many different shows. It just ate up all my time and energy. But at the same time I did start writing short stories.

The novel was sold on the strength of the first 80 pages of the draft and five-page outline for a six figure advance. I think the publication of Stars helped with the sale. Although the short story collection wasn't a huge seller – anthologies seldom are – it meant I had a track record of sorts. Yet the reason why Bantam jumped at the book depends on its subject matter. It is very high concept and original, which is why I decline to go into any in detail at this point. The book is going to have a 500,000 print run on the first edition. Obviously I'm delighted by that, and somewhat surprised. At the moment Bantam are deliberating whether or not it is going to be a hardback or mass market paperback. I'd prefer the latter, he confides.

Film wise *Red Sleep*, the modern day vampire tale he is co-writing with Mick Garris, reported on last issue, is still moving towards, though at a slower pace than first reported. We are no longer dealing with The Gotta Company. Matheson explains, and Lesley Belzberg, John Landis' partner, isn't involved anymore, but John still plans to executive produce. As Mick's been adapting *In the Flesh* for Clive Barker's story for Warner Brothers, which Mick is due to direct, and I've been busy writing and developing the TV series this year, we haven't finished the screenplay yet. Originally, we held back because it looked likely we were going to get a development deal with either Joel Silver and Universal or David Geffen. But we've now decided to complete it on spec as it puts the juggernaut on your side of the net. In the last couple of years I've seen nearly a dozen spec scripts get sold and made. It is easy to get into a development deal then lose all enthusiasm when the script gets through dozens of changes. Anyway, *Red Sleep* should be ready for finishing in January.

The film awaiting release is *Loose Cannons*, a dark comedy starring Gene Hackman and Dan Aykroyd as a pair of cops, only the Aykroyd character suffers from multiple personality syndrome and his partner never knows who he is dealing with. Directed by Bob Clark (*Porky's*, *Murder By Decree*), the picture penned by both Matheson's is scheduled to open in the US in late winter. The project awaiting production also is a collaboration between father and son, is *Shifter*, a mega budget science fiction action horror script purchased by The Richard Donner Company to be helmed by the *Lethal Weapon* director himself. Further to this Matheson and Garris have been approached by Stewart Cornfeld, the producer of the original, to co-write *The Fly 3*.

We're first in line to do it, he reveals, with Mick to direct and me to produce. Stewart liked the work Mick did on *Fly 2* but this is left the project. The film that resulted was so far removed from Mick's intentions I think he'd like the opportunity to redeem himself. People see your name on a movie and they immediately build you response, he even if only a small percentage of your material made it to the screen.

Comedy still features strongly in Matheson's areas of interest, and not surprisingly the TV series are all situation comedies. But we're not talking *Hurlygumbling* or *Married With Kids* here. These are series like *Cheers* and *Taxi*, bittersweet comedy grounded in character rather than string of gags. Also these series are quite dark, almost horror comedies, which is just how the stuff I write comes out. Writing horror and comedy comes naturally to me. They really are both sides of the same coin.

Ladies and Gentlemen – Richard Christian Matheson, the Woody Allen of the Chamsaw set.


## SIGNING SESSIONS

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**The Big Nowhere** James Ellroy
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**Queen of the Damned** Anne Rice
**The Silence of the Lambs** Thomas Harris
**Book of the Dead** ed Shepp & Spector
**Blood Is Not Enough** ed Ellen Datlow
**Prime Evil** ed Douglas E Winter

**Best Newcomer** – Mark Morris (Toady)

**FILMS**
**Henry Portrait of a Serial Killer** – Dir John McNaughton
**Society** Dir Brian Yuzna
**Earth Girls Are Easy** Dir Julien Temple
**Apartment Zero** Dir Martin Donovan
**The Abyss** Dir James Cameron
**Tales From the Crypt** Dir Robert Zemeckis Walter Hill Richard Donner
**Carnival of Souls (restored reissue)** – Dir Herk Harvey
**Santa Sangre** Dir Alexander Jodorowsky
**The Church** Dir Michelle Soavi

**TELEVISION**
**Laurel Entertainment's Monsters** (3 episodes)
**The Fever Man** Michael Gornick
**Rouse Him Not** Mark Shoesmith
**Mannequins of Horror** Ernest Fatentino

**TIPS FOR 1990**
**Writers:**
Nicholas Royle Elizabeth Massey Kitty Mancini

**Books**
Counterparts Nicholas Royle
The Shaft – David J Schow
LA Confidential James Ellroy
The Stand (unexpurgated version) Stephen King

**Films:**
The Dark Man Sam Raimi
Hardware – Richard Stanley
Two Evil Eyes George R Romero/Dario Argento
The Silence of the Lambs – Jonathan Demme
Jacob's Ladder Adrian Lyne
Freaksploitation/Basket Case 2 – Frank Hernandez

Society

# FEAR

## FEAR FICTION

What more exciting news could we ask for than the glad tidings contained in a letter we received a few weeks ago from Jeff Vandermeer? An American author from Gainesville, Jeff had his story So the Dead Walk Slowly published in the November issue of FEAR and he wrote to tell us that he has since been approached by the editor of an anthology who has asked him to submit a piece. The editor had been impressed with So the Dead when he read it in FEAR.

This is precisely the sort of gratifying news we want to hear. So if you have been asked to submit further work on the basis of a story you've had published in these pages – do let us know. It cheers us up to know that your efforts – and ours! – have been justly rewarded.

If you have a tale to tell, and if it fits FEAR's horror, science fiction or fantasy brief, then send it to David Western, Fiction Editor, FEAR, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB. Please remember to indicate the wordage of your story (which must be typed, preferably double spaced) and enclose that you enclose a day-time phone number, a photograph of yourself and a fifty word biography.

Readers whose stories are being considered for publication will receive notification of this in writing. This is not a guarantee that your story will be published and, as we can only feature five or six new stories per issue, it could be some time before those eventually selected appear in print. So please be patient – and keep those phone calls to a minimum! Of course, if you need your story back urgently, you can contact us on the usual number.

We are obliged to remind new writers that FEAR does not look kindly upon works of plagiarism. So if you haven't got anything new to say, don't rip off somebody else – sit back instead and savour another fantasy packed, horror filled wedge of fabulous FEAR fiction.

This month we are delighted to feature Ian Watson as our celebrity author. Ian kicks off our fiction section with his curiously compelling monologue, Lambert Lambert.

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# LAMBERT, LAMBERT

IAN WATSON

You must be finding your present situation pretty odd, eh?

Bear up pal! Chin up. There's company awaiting you further on inside.

Why *me*? you're wondering. I took pity on you, see. Yes, pity! I decided to save you.

Course, once I started doing this trick of mine I developed a certain appetite for it, as you might say. I won't go so far as to call it a craving. If I craved, could I control myself, could I choose my customers? Could I ration myself sensibly? Whatever my girth, I'm no glutton. No addict, me. I feel a definite relish, that's about it.

**"You need to appreciate what a kindness I'm doing you"**

Listen up, lad, and you'll understand. *What's in a name?* asked the Bard. Quite a lot, I do believe. To a greater extent than chance can explain, people's names can be unusually fitting. I'd go so far as to say that in good many cases the name maketh the man.

Take me, Bert Brown. Blunt and solid, eh? Bert Brown could hardly be a violinist or a philosopher. He could be a bus driver or a postman. In my case, a prison camp guard. Right? You agree? Only my pals inside know differently.

Oh, you'll meet them just as soon as I do my trick the next time, and you get squeezed within. Interesting company! Your sort. The people they put in these camps are usually interesting, at least when they arrive and for a few months afterwards. Then they stop being quite so interesting. Lack of the old brain-food, eh? Gruel and thin soup, scabby veg and stale bread wears them down. *You're* still able to peep out. When that stops, you'll meet the others. Oh, I can talk to them or just listen to them nattering but you can't yet.

By inside I'm not of course referring to the electrified fences, the rows of huts. I'm talking about *me*. This here is my standard orientation lecture. How thoughtful of me to provide one! Well, it calms you down. Otherwise you might thrash around and give me a spot of indigestion, as I were. You might unbalance me a bit, though for a fact that would take some doing! I'm carrying ballast chum. You need to appreciate what a kindness I'm doing you. I'm sure you're catching on, you're getting there.

Where were we? Oh yes, my name. Bert's a useful sort of moniker to have these days. Doesn't attract attention, doesn't mark a fellow out. That's how I see it. It's a name, if you'll excuse my humour lacking any colour.

But thirty years gone by, my mum and dad named me Lambert. Lambert Brown. That's what Mum always called me when I was a nipper. My little lamb, Lambert! Lambkin. Lambert. Where are you, Lambkin? She stopped that caper as soon as I started battering up. Problem with the glands, right? Soon I became bloated Bert, who got bullied at school. That's what makes me sensitive: that's how I can sympathise with people like you. Then I got a bit too big to bully.

Mum actually took the name from an old encyclopedia that was lying around. Chap called Lambert Simnel attempted to seize the throne of Britain back in the time of Henry VII, he got chopped for his pains. Lambert Simnel was named after a Saint Lambert, a Billy Graham type who also got the chop. Belgium has lots of churches in his honour. Belgium, mayonnaise and chips. I know things, see. It's the company I keep.

Not a very good track record so far for Lamberts? Mum didn't care much about history,

It was the little lamb aspect that appealed to her She was like that of diminished IQ Dad too I suppose though he must have been a bit brighter because he pissed off Presumably I get my brains from him Simnel s some kind of kraut cake *Very* fattening, I used to eat a fair whack of rich stodgy cake when I was a kid I don I now I m very stringent about my diet

Stop twitching, will you? Won t do any good. Think about the word 'lam' Means to thump to thrash That s what goes on inside the wire Beatings My fellow goons like to cul a prisoner out of the herd now and then and work him over At random when the fancy takes them Nothing systematic If starving doesn't get you a thumping might You re finished after that

Commander doesn't mind Selleves the strain They're all missing persons in them, to begin with If someone becomes more missing, who cares? He certainly hasn t done a runner No inmate gets through the high voltage wire or the auto-guns So pal, you won t be missed No one s looking for you

I mean, that applies across the board to all the prisoners They can forget any silly notion of help from some other country — which is where it would need to come from From America or Aussia But every country s in a mess Sea level economic collapse, heat, famine need I go on? We have this country sewn up tight for a long time to come Count your blessings I feel sorry for people like you

Lam also means to escape, to beat it You re on the lam now Thanks to me

All comes down to names doesn't it?

I was working as a debt collector in Leicester See I could intimidate people That s where I discovered about my namesake and felt such a strong yen to join the penal service Not surprising huh? Best job these days So many nuisances being rounded up Pinkos Greens, Poofters and wogs Domestics and Arty Farties All the stirrers Got to belt up about stuff like freedom and politics and art If this country s going to survive the greenhouse Doesn t really require as much exertion as sticking one a bod In some pensioner s doorway not with all the control equipment at your disposal If goons want to work up a sweat thrashing a detainee, that s their business I don t join in Other fish to fry Not that I m easily exhausted, by the way I'm a tireless fellow

Same as my namesake My doubles Right chap name of Daniel Lambert The fat man of Leicester

Found out about him when a hailstorm chased me into the museum Hail the size of bloody golf balls, shooting down at machine-gun rate bouncing as high as a bus. Several people were killed that day Old folks babies in prams Windows shattered all over The climate s all screwed up and that s a fact Anyway, the museum was showing Lambert's clothes and other memorabilia

He was born in the year 1770, and his Dad ran the House of Correction, the Bridewell prison This Bridewell wasn't for your murderers or forgers or thieves who were bound for the noose and the gibbet No, it housed people who had committed what you might call moral offences against society Debts, drunkenness, vagrancy, that type of thing You ought to know about moral offences against society, hmm? They re what landed you in the camp

In his earlier days Lambert's dad was huntsman to the Earl of Stamford. His uncle was gamekeeper to the next Earl, and his grandad on his mum s side was a famous cock-fighter. Thus young Daniel grew up real sporty Swimming, fishing, riding to hounds hunting otters fighting cocks Course the countryside wasn t any distance from the heart of the city back then Oh he loved the sporting life Pinkos like you did your damnedest to spoil all that Still what does it matter nowadays?

With all that exercise our Dan became a powerful fellow Could carry quarter of a ton without any fuss Could kick seven feet high standing on one leg Once he thumped a whopping dancing bear owned by some Froggy entertainers You see they were performing in the street outside the gaol when the gaol dog went for the bear and this Froggy in charge unmuzzled Ursa Major to let her kill the dog Felled her with one blow to the skull, did our Dan The bear threw in the sponge

Dan s folks apprenticed him to the button trade in Birmingham To learn die-sinking and engraving Must have seemed a bright idea at the time A few years later,fashion turned topsy-turvy Out went buckles and fancy buttons And it was a time of unrest the factory burned down In a riot So Dan returned to Leicester, Dad resigned from the Bridewell, and his boy took over as keeper

Boy am I saying? Dan started putting on weight at a swinging pace (Could it have been the lack of sporty exercise running a prison? Not to mention the glands?) Wasn't too long before he weighed in at nearly fifty-three stone Measured three feet round each leg, and nine feet round the body When he was sitting down his belly buried his thighs to the knees His legs were pillows almost smothering his feet. The flap of his waistcoat pocket stretched a foot across Special clothes for him special chairs more like sofas

One remarkable fact was how healthy our Dan was When he finally died most likely of a heart attack at the Waggon and Horses in Stamford where he d gone for the races, they needed to demolish a wall of the inn to get him out in his coffin — he was putrefying fast But up until then, not a whisper of frailty! Dan could fair trot upstairs He could outwalk most fellows He d teach kids to swim in the river Soar — he could float with two grown men on his back. Never caught a cold in his life, even when he used to come in soaking wet and sleep with his window open then don the same damp

**"They needed to demolish a wall of the inn to get him out in his coffin — he was putrefying fast"**

clothes in the morning. He never snored. Never panted. Perfect bronchials. His voice was a sweet, strong tenor.

I'm a lot like our Dan Lambert with regard to health and vigour. Additionally he was a very *nice* bloke. So am I — as you must agree — saving you from slow starvation! Really considerate to the guests in his lock up, he was. Humane? Benevolent? Why he was a byword. Departing prisoners sometimes wept with gratitude.

But in 1805 the magistrates decided that such prisoners as those would be better employed labouring in the town's factories. So Daniel's job came to an end, though not without an annuity of fifty pounds a year for life for him, freely granted as a mark of esteem.

Alas, fifty pounds proved insufficient for his needs. That's why our man-mountain began to exhibit himself to the curious. Either that, or hide in his house! Such was the fame of his bulk, people would knock at the door on any pretext.

In the main, the exhibiting down in London went off really well, since our Dan was such a damn decent fellow. Holding gracious court, more like a king of men than a freak. Thus there was nothing ludicrous about the occasion when the largest man in the world met the smallest man — a Polish dwarf named Count Borulawski, whose missus used to pop him on the mantleshelf as a punishment when she was feeling peeved with him. A single one of Dan's sleeves could easily have provided a whole suit of clothes for the Count. This was a meeting of two civilised prodigies. Ah, civilisation's taken a downturn since those days, hasn't it just?

Dan's head was perfectly proportioned, by the way. No bloating or grossness about his face! A normal, handsome head was simply dwarfed by a giant body.

Do I hear you enquire as to his diet? Simplicity itself! Quite Spartan. A single dish at a meal, and he only ever drank water. A little like the menu in the camps.

I can tell you, how little he ate came as a revelation to me. Did he convert the whole of his modest intake of food into flesh, a hundred per cent? Didn't he ever crap or pee? Seems that all of his bodily secretions were quite normal! So where did his bulk come from? Out of thin air?

You've heard the old saying how inside every fat man there's a thin man crying to get out? Do I hear you crying right now? Don't bother. Wipe your sobs away. Adjust to circumstances, that's the ticket.

Let's put two and two together tentatively. Soon as our Dan becomes boss of that gaol he puts on stones and stones of extra weight without any evidence of gluttony. And he liked his prisoners, he was good to them.

Could he have been so kindly disposed that he *liberated* his favourites — by engulfing them? By absorbing them into himself? New there's a fine way to solve overcrowding in prisons! The gaoler becomes his own private gaol.

Ah, but magistrates back in those days were finicky. They kept count. Had ledgers and lists. Families enquired after prisoners. Creditors bore them in mind. Prisoners didn't merely disappear, as nowadays. Once you're behind the wire now, it's do-as-you please.

Let me tell you. It pleased me very much when I absorbed my first prisoner. (Pleased me for his sake too! I was saving him.)

Dan Lambert inspired me. But it was me myself, Bert Brown, who cottoned-on to the trick. The cottoning-on was a leap such as bloody Einstein made. Fourth dimension and all that. That's where you all are: stacked behind each other in another dimension inside of me. Soon as I cottoned on I could do it.

Quite a party's going on in here. You're busy debating, arguing, telling your life stories. Making friends and quarrelling. Comforting and entertaining one another. Drawing up manifestos, playing games, composing poems. And not worrying at all about starving or thumpings. All courtesy of big Bert Brown, Lambert Brown.

Now, not *you* yet. I've told you you need to wait till I absorb someone new. That's how it works. I grab one of you spindly types, one that I fancy, take him somewhere quiet. I wrap myself around him, I engulf, I crush. And into me goes the personality — after the ritual. Eating some liver, heart and brain, right. Fair's fair; gives me a spot of extra nourishment to fuel the procedure, very like what I gather savages in the South Seas used to get up to. Only I do it properly seeing as how I understand about the fourth dimension I'm putting you into.

I'm sure Dan Lambert didn't do my trick, but I think there must have been *something* a bit four dimensional about him, don't you. Four dimensions squashed into three. If everything possesses four dimensions the way Einstein said then that includes food and drink. Your ordinary run of geezer only uses three dimensions, that's all he can take. A Dan Lambert could digest the fourth dimension of food too — that's how he got so big on so little. There's the explanation.

Me, I'm a step beyond our Dan, aren't I? Good thing for you I am! Welcome to the family. I'm really expanding wonderfully within. It's an education, all these new persons inside me. Henry and Crispin and Alec and Mohammed and Kasta and Lucian and Tony. Oooh a good thirty lodgers by now with plenty of room for expansion. More customers pouring into the camp everyday.

I wouldn't have thought I had it in me! But I do. I can contain multitudes, could be my very own prison camp.

Actually, so as not to keep you on tenterhooks I think I'll take another stroll inside the wire pretty soon, stomp into a hut, haul out a nice face, then it's off to somewhere special and get down to business. My fellow goons don't know what they're missing.

All this hard graft of *thinking at you* is fair working me up an appetite.

**IAN WATSON** is a Labour MP turned science fiction writer turned horror novelist whose latest book, *Miracle Visitors*, is published this month. His new novel continues a string of bestsellers which includes *The Power Meat*, *The Fireworm* and *Savage Pilgrim*. He lives with his wife near Daventry in England.

**"Do I hear you crying right now? Don't bother. Wipe your sobs awey. Adjust to circumstences, thet's the ticket"**

# SIX DEAD BOYS IN A VERY DARK WORLD

**By Mark Chadbourn**

**"Six pairs of eyes stared glassily into the gloom"**

It was very dark in the house, and very cold. Soon, quite soon, it would be darker still. There was no sunlight in Gary Nicholson's new world: no comfort, no joy. But that was then, seven hours earlier things had been very different.

'Hey! Careful you don't fall!'

Elma Jacobs teetered on top of a pair of rickety stepladders as she scrubbed frantically at a stubborn spot on her gleaming window.

She looked down on hearing Gary's call, and smiled. She had forgotten to put her teeth in again. 'I know what I'm doing, young Mr Nicholson. I've been climbing up and down these steps for fifty years now without tumbling off them, and I'm not about to start now.'

'Just being careful, Mrs Jacobs. Just being careful.'

Gary's heart skipped a beat as she unsteadily negotiated the creaking steps, but she made it onto solid ground without a mishap. 'You off to the Job Centre again then?' she asked, peering at him through her spectacles. He nodded. 'Well, I hope they find something for you this time. Don't like to see strapping boys like yourself sitting round with nothing to do.'

'I'm not exactly over the moon about it myself, Mrs J, but I do my best not to let it get me down.'

'Aye, you do at that. Gary. Always a happy face and a smile for your neighbours.' She pinched his cheek like a maiden aunt teasing a baby, an action which prompted him to blush involuntarily. 'They never should have shut that factory down, putting lads like you on the dole. These are the best years of your life. You need a good job, bit of money in your pocket. You need somewhere a bit better than that bedsit.'

'Ah, the bedsit's fine. And, even if I did have more space, I wouldn't have anything to put in it.' He couldn't help but smile at her. She looked like an old wizened mole: her lined face

screwed up tightly as she tried to shield her eyes from the sun Anyway he continued, 'I'd better be on my way I don't want to find I've been beaten to the job of the year

'Don't lose heart, love She waved as he walked off

Don't worry he shouted back 'I'll never do that'

When he found himself out of a job, Gary's greatest fear had been of suffering like some of the other unemployed people he saw, overcome by a creeping lethargy that sapped both desire and ambition But in the two months he had been out of work things had still been good He was happy Many people had told him how depressing life was in northern towns these days no hope no humour, just a numbing realisation that everything was grinding you down He didn't see it like that All around him were real people with a great joy for life But many of them kept it well hidden, so that the avaricious and the twisted could not crush it underfoot

At the corner of the street he ducked into the newsagent's for a pack of twenty *Camel* Although he had to watch every single penny carefully since he had started on the dole this was one of the few luxuries he allowed himself Mr Patel cracked a few jokes and then apologised for his five-year old son who was tugging at Gary's trouser leg Gary rubbed the lad's hair and laughed as the youngster giggled and ran into the back room Mr Patel smiled and muttered something about the waywardness of children

Outside the shop, Gary lit a cigarette and drew the smoke in deeply as he gazed up and down the street he had lived in for a year since he moved out of his parent's home He did not have much he thought, but at least he was content he turned and set off along his regular daily route to the Job Centre in two months he had never deviated from his carefully planned path along the back streets but that morning as his thoughts drifted he suddenly felt the urge to walk down a different street.

He wrinkled his nose as he turned the corner, there was a strange smell in the air like rotting vegetables and though it was broad daylight the street was in shadow Halfway along he paused — the strange overpowering silence suddenly became as obvious as if music had been blaring from every window — and as he did so one of the houses on the right caught his eye The building was old and obviously deserted the windows gaped blackly like toothless mouths A bed had been placed across one of the upstairs windows but the mattress had sagged inwards dramatically and only served to draw attention to the fact that the house had been empty for a long time Gary leaned on the wall and looked closer flinging his cigarette butt onto the pavement There was a hole under the ground floor front window as if workmen had started to excavate and then stopped suddenly, scrubby yellow weeds poked up high through the concrete The front door was yellow too, and faded and peeling with the effects of the weather

Gary was about to move on when he thought he heard a noise He could not quite make out what it was an animal perhaps, trapped and frightened but it fired his curiosity and prompted him to investigate Looking over his shoulder to make sure no one was watching, he stepped into the front garden and surreptitiously tried the door With a slight push from his shoulder it opened, creaking and grinding as it swung inwards and forced back the pile of rubbish and rubble behind it

The smell of rotting vegetables seemed to hang in the dank air of the corridor It was cold In there, like the inside of a church, and Gary shivered and flicked his lighter to provide some illumination

As the shadows receded, Gary could see that the corridor was strewn ankle deep in litter, beer bottles, rusty cans broken bricks and mortar yellowing newspapers, a bicycle frame pieces of dismantled furniture It was like a rubbish tip and he thought twice about walking over it, wondering what vermin crawled around beneath the surface

To his left the stairs rose up dark and imposing, but he found himself drawn past them to a door which stood open He peered into the dense black space and could faintly make out steps leading down to a cellar

All thoughts of the Job Centre had vanished, sucked into a vacuum which had also claimed his natural sense of wariness he put one foot on the creaking stairs All that mattered at that moment was to see what was at the bottom

He descended the stairs slowly stopping regularly to flick his lighter Then the flame was extinguished by a sudden movement which plunged him into a darkness more overwhelming than space The strange odour still hung in the air but it no longer seemed to bother him, nor did the chill which increased the further down the steps he progressed

Gary paused when he came to the bottom. The darkness at the foot of the stairs seemed impenetrable but slowly his eyes adjusted and he could make out basic shapes alien and strangely distorted in the gloom His foot struck something and, when he stooped down to see what it was, he noticed an old wine bottle with a well used candle in the neck Cautiously he lit the taper and the darkness danced wavered and reluctantly receded revealing a horrific sight which made Gary catch his breath in a mixture of surprise and fear

Slumped against the damp, salt encrusted cellar walls were three corpses two more bodies lay on their backs on the ground and another hung by his neck from a shattered light fitting Six pairs of eyes stared glassily into the gloom The bodies were all of men in their late teens The most striking aspect was their pale and hollow-cheeked faces which seemed to have a

**"All the bodies were as fresh as if their hearts had ceased to beat mere moments before"**

universal expression of extreme melancholy Gary looked around the room nervously for the perpetrator of this crime, but discovered that he was alone Then he noticed that three of the corpses had been there for a considerable period of time dust covered them like a fine layer of snow and cobwebs trailed magnificently from their clothes.

Gary made a closer inspection of the bodies, the candle flame wavering with his movements and saw to his amazement that there was no decomposition All the bodies were as fresh as if their hearts had ceased to beat mere moments before He thought he vaguely recognised two of the youths but though he racked his memory, he could not remember where he had seen them before

Baffled by the chilling scene, Gary slumped into a broken wooden chair and stared incredulously from one corpse to another Finally his gaze fell upon a thick, blue exercise book lying on the floor He leaned forwards, picked it up and began casually to flick through the creamy white pages The first few were taken up with writing in different hands some in ink thin and scratchy, and some thick and blocked in felt-tip pen He studied the cover and saw that the volume had originally been entitled ONE DEAD BOY IN A VERY DARK WORLD, but that had been altered to read TWO then THREE FOUR and FIVE But each time the word had been furiously scratched out until now the title read SIX DEAD BOYS IN A VERY DARK WORLD

Gary sat there with the exercise book on his lap and with six strangely fresh corpses surrounding him, and wondered why his initial fear had departed He felt uncommonly calm as he turned to the first page and began to read.

My name is Robert Buckley and in half an hour I am going to kill myself I can see no reason to continue living The world is a very cold and dark place and I find no warmth or love to keep me going into an uncertain future There is no one to support me, no one to care for me There is nothing beyond the bleak meaningless existence we find ourselves in People have told me that there is a God but I can see no sign of Him and if He is not there to give a reason to this suffering, then what is the point in continuing? I have prepared myself for that simple tiny step into the great void and I welcome death with open arms

Let me tell you about myself so that you can understand how I have reached this moment. I am nineteen years old and have just completed my first year at university For the last three years I have been dating this girl who lives on the other side of town Her name is Kathleen Harrison and she is the most beautiful girl I have ever seen Her hair is long and brown, her eyes are hazel and she has a smile that would make the coldest heart melt Our love grew stronger as the months passed until it became the glue that held my life together; just before I left home for university we discussed marriage and our life together, we planned our future.

I was ecstatically happy I no longer felt the need to go out on the town drinking with my friends I felt good merely sitting in front of the TV with Kathleen, watching ridiculous programmes and laughing, locked in our own private world

It is difficult to describe how much she came to mean to me, how much my world became totally centred around her Whenever we were apart, my thoughts always turned to her Whenever we were together, I would find myself staring at her or watching her from out of the corner of my eye No one could have asked for a better life

Then one day it all came crashing down I returned home from university for a few weeks holiday and rushed round to her house expecting her to put her arms around me and kiss me as she always did But all she said was 'It's over At first I thought she was joking How could it be true? We had the perfect relationship There was no reason for her to want to end it But she just said that while I had been away she d been thinking and now she had decided she wanted to be on her own I looked through the open door into the room behind her, and saw a large bouquet of flowers in a vase

As I walked away all I could think about was that huge yawning hole which had suddenly appeared in my life You cannot imagine the feeling of emptiness I wandered the streets trying to think what I had done wrong, what I could do to put it right then I came across this house An overwhelming desire to escape it all came over and I broke in through the front door and came down here to the cellar As I sit thinking, I know there is no reason to continue Without her, I am nothing In my pocket is the engagement ring I bought with all my savings. She will never see it now'

Gary leaned back against the cold wall and shook his head The handwriting faltered towards the end of the piece as if a stream of sorrow from the heart had dried in the heat of futility Gary could almost feel his sadness, it seemed to leak out from the pages of the book like a cloying mist swirling up around his head, and a lump rose in his throat He stared across at what appeared to be the oldest of the six boys The sadness was there in his eyes like stone One ghostly white hand clutched a rusty razor blade and Gary could see the dark lines across his wrist and the black stain on the floor where the blood had seeped away All he could think about was the incredible waste of such a young life and the powerful emotions which must have spurred him to his end

He looked around at the other bodies and, with his curiosity aroused once more he turned the page The handwriting there was different, clumsier and with fewer flourishes, but as Gary read on it was obvious that the sentiments were the same

I've been sitting here thinking for half and

**MARK CHADBOURN** is a 29-year old journalist He has just turned freelance after four years of working on the nationals as a crime reporter and most recently as music editor of *Today* His interests include comics old movies and new music This is the first fiction he has had published

**"I have prepared myself for that simple, tiny step into the great void and I welcome death with open arms"**

hour after reading the previous pages. and I've decided that this boy was right There is no reason for living. I m going to put an end to it all as soon as I've finished writing this I've got to take my time because this is important; it tells the people who come afterwards why we did ll and gives a meaning to our deaths There has to be some meaning somewhere, doesn't there?

My name is Dave Hodges I'm a Builder by trade, seventeen years old and I live In South Street with my parents and my brother Three days ago, I watched my grandmother die It was the first time I d ever come face to face with death and it has affected me deeply She had cancer They only diagnosed it three weeks ago, so it all happened very suddenly It has taken me a while to come to terms with her death but I've spent every day since she went thinking about it. She wasn't in pain or anything like that — it was quite a peaceful death. But that s not the point

When I was younger I thought she would always be around It never entered my head that one day she wouldn t be there, but over the last three days I've discovered an emptiness that I know is going to be with me for ever It s the little things that really get to you One less place at the dinner table her empty chair in front of the TV... The everyday routine just seems so strange and you know things are never going to be the same again

'One Image in particular has remained with me Just before she died the whole family gathered round her bed crying I looked from one face to the next and then to my grandmother and suddenly I realised that one day they'd be gone too and I d be all alone I just couldn t see the point of living if it all just ended in death, and I knew I wouldn t be able to face all that heartbreak In the future

So I've decided to end it all now, get it all out of the road. It s the easiest way What s the point In suffering? I've a bottle of tablets from the medicine cabinet and I m going to take them all at once I won t feel a thing.

Gary looked over at the boy lying on his back on the floor Beneath a mop of blond hair the face was unlined, peaceful, almost angelic The bottle lay next to one of his tattooed arms

Gary returned to the journal, flicking feverishly through the pages to read the other accounts They were all similar, tales of loss and sadness, stories of people unable to cope in a world which seemed unnecessarily harsh His throat grew dry and his eyes moistened as he read each new statement, turning the pages slowly with a trembling hand.

Then one paragraph in the final letter from the dead caught his eye

I've read everything that s gone before and I just wondered what if despair is like a disease? What if it waits here in this cellar Infecting each visitor with a mind-numbing melancholy? Or what if it's worse? What if it actually exists a sentient being Invisible but powerful living and growing strong in the shadows in order to taint anyone who comes close Maybe it feeds on the sadness I don t know But if it exists it has me now and I'm happy

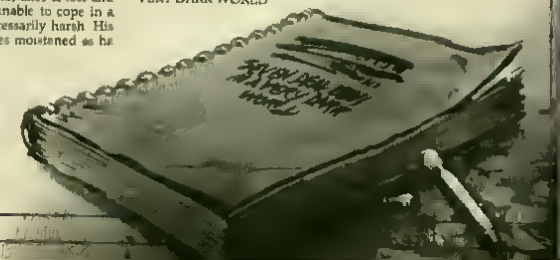
Gary closed the book quietly, trying not to make any sound which might disturb the reverential quiet in the shrine of despair He looked again at the boys glancing from one face to another, and they returned his gaze Now they were at peace they had escaped the awfulness of it all. There was a tear in his eye and he smiled

Outside there was a chill in the air which had nothing to do with summer Slowly he retraced his steps, carefully examining the dreary terraced houses that lined the road dull in their monotony On the street corner there was a gang of youths jobless like himself frittering away the precious minutes of their lives on mundane activities, there was no work to break the tedium or provide them with the money they needed to do anything that mattered Overhead slate grey clouds swept up from the horizon cutting off the wan, sickly sunlight Mr Patel s son was bawling loudly and Mrs Jacobs was peering out from behind her lace curtains, her face pinched and mean.

Gary went into the house and climbed the dark stairs to his dingy bedsit The bed had not been made The breakfast pots were unwashed in the sink beneath the monotonous drip of the leaking tap There was a faint smell of sweat in the air He searched in a cupboard for the box he wanted and then, taking a can of lager and a felt-tip pen from the sideboard, he returned to the derelict house

In the cold darkness of the cellar before his silent companions he placed the box of rat poison and the lager beside him and scored through the title of the book with the pen. Then he wrote beneath it SEVEN DEAD BOYS IN A VERY DARK WORLD

**"Gary could see the dark lines across his wrist and the black stain on the floor where the blood had seeped away"**



"The old men regarded her with a look of fearful anticipation that she had become used to seeing on the faces of her victims"

# Something Old, Something New

By M W Gower

Sarah inspected the contents of the room with professional detachment. One or two likely pieces caught her eye immediately. Almost unconsciously, her mind began an evaluation.

*Nothing fantastic of course but well that oak dresser, for instance. I got a good price on the last one I sold. And these paintings. Oils always sell. Mind you, the oldest thing in this house seems to be the owner.*

The old man regarded her with a look of fearful anticipation she had become used to seeing on the faces of her victims. *Clients*, she reminded herself. *They're clients.*

He gave the impression of incredible age. His limbs were matchstick thin under a shiny black suit. From under a fraying cuff, the hand that grasped the battered walking-stick was gnarled and twisted with arthritis. Liver spots lavishly decorated hands and face alike. Weak, watery eyes sank deep into the wrinkled flesh of the face, next to the jutting beak like nose, they seemed like craters whose depths flashed with a penetrating inner light. His eyes locked momentarily with hers.

Instinctively Sarah backed away.

*He's an ugly old thing*, she thought. *Why do old people always have to be so revolting. They make my skin crawl.*

The idea that someday she might be like that hovered at the edge of her consciousness. Fiercely she rejected it and turned to a mirror on the wall beside her for reassurance.

She was about to look away, satisfied with the sight of the fresh, twenty-year-old complexion glowing beneath waves of dark blonde hair when her attention was caught by the elaborate carving of the frame around the mirror.

Surmounting the mirror was a bird arising, wings outstretched from a bed of flames. A phoenix. It was carved in such elaborate, painstaking detail that it looked almost real.

'This is quite unusual, Mr.,' Sarah struggled to remember the old man's name from the previous day's phone call. '—Mr Fonica. I don't think it has any *real* value. It is very nice though.'

Mr Fonica stepped closer to her and peered

shortsightedly at the mirror

Ah yes, the phoenix His voice sounded worn out. It was reedy and gasping. You might say it's a sort of family emblem He paused for breath. I carved the frame myself, you know As a present for my wife More years ago than you can imagine

Your wife ?

Departed this world a long time ago

Sarah heaved an inward sigh of relief One decrepit old person at a time was quite enough for her She changed the subject

You're moving to somewhere new then?

Yes He seemed to hesitate for a second before voicing his answer Yes. I decided it was time to to have some new things around me

Sarah mentally revised her tactics — *I'll have to play up to this one a bit he doesn't seem as confused as some of the other senile old buggers*

She adopted her warmest, most reassuring manner

Yes I think you've made the right decision Old things are very nice in their own way, but they do take so much looking after She waved her arm, indicating the dust mantled furniture Sooner or later it always makes more sense to change to something new A nice new home with modern furnishings will be much better for you. Much more convenient.

Mr Fonica nodded distantly

*Perhaps he is senile* thought Sarah *I'm sure he hasn't been listening to a word I've said The day might turn out to be more profitable than I originally thought*

**"She had to resist an overwhelming urge to push the decaying old body away from here, to see it lying broken at the foot of the stairs"**

Not for the first time she noticed the musty odour that she always associated with old houses She wrinkled her nose in disgust quelling a sudden impulse to make a dash for the fresher air of the young vigorous world outside

Are you interested in trinkets at all? Mr Fonica asked The light pressure of his claw-like hand on her arm brought her back down to earth. Reflexively, she drew her arm away from his, as if fearing contagion

I have a few pieces upstairs Perhaps you would like to see them? He didn't wait for her response I'm afraid you will have to help me with the stairs though he brandished his walking stick apologetically I can't seem to manage them on my own these days

Somewhere in the depths of Sarah's mind, a luminescent display of pound signs began to flash on and off

*This could be the jackpot* she thought. *I'll bet that mirror is worth a small fortune The senile old fool couldn't have carved it himself! And jewellery too Thank you God*

I sometimes handle one or two small items she replied Let's have a look at them shall we? She forced a smile

It took an age for the frail old man to shuffle on his unwilling legs to the foot of the stairs. When at last he reached them he turned and looked expectantly at Sarah She took a deep breath gritted her teeth, and gingerly placed a supporting arm around his waist

Only the thought of the money enabled Sarah to control her revulsion She had to resist an overwhelming urge to push the decaying old body away from here, to see it lying broken at the foot of the stairs Her last reserves of willpower were needed to fix the smile on her face as his foetid breath filled her delicate nostrils Her skin crawled at the touch of his hands which clutched at her body in an almost exploratory manner as they searched for support

Even the rancid smell which permeated the bedroom was preferable to the memory of that nightmare journey to the first floor On Mr Fonica's direction, she opened a deep drawer in the base of a heavy walnut wardrobe to reveal several items of assorted jewellery

*Nice enough pieces if I can get them cheap That wedding ring's definitely gold and the locket could be early Victorian I'll bet it's solid silver*

Lift up the baize The old man's tone was commanding; a marked contrast to his earlier feeble whine

Sarah found a minute leather thong attached to the bottom of the drawer When she pulled at this, the base of the drawer lifted up on a hinge A fantastic sight shimmered into view Sarah prided herself on her ability to value items at a glance One look at the item which now burned into her vision convinced her that here was a piece that defied all her assessment skills

*Even Sotheby's would be hard pressed to place a value on this one* The idea both excited and disturbed her

Her hands reached out with no conscious direction on her part Her trembling fingers fumbled at the fastenings of the collar as she placed it around her own slender neck. She savoured the cold weight of it against her skin A mirror on the wardrobe door reflected her image picking out the dull, golden gleam of the outstretched bird's wings that formed the main body of the collar

*It's mine — it's meant for me!*

Desire filled her head, swamping all other thoughts One outstanding priority now overrode all others She had to possess this object she had to make it hers in any way open to her

Sarah reviewed the options. *The senile old fool wouldn't hide the thing like that if he didn't have some idea of its worth What about getting the Harris brothers to do a drainpipe job? No This is mine I won't share it It belongs to me!*

Has anyone made an offer? She enquired tentatively

You are the first to see it. I selected you with great care

A puzzled frown creased Sarah's brow She looked sharply at Mr Fonica He regarded her intently his eyes seemed sharper more piercing They burned into her penetrating to the darkest recesses of her mind.

Then he spoke I am aware of the collar's worth It is indeed beyond value His voice had

lost its reedy quality, and seemed more confident more assured However, it does bear a price one that you are able to pay

A bony talon stabbed at her nipper body indicating her new found obsession She backed away fearing that he would try to take it from her.

It can become yours. If you are willing to pay the price He pushed his face towards hers until that great beak of a nose almost touched her own Look in the mirror A collar such as this is made to adorn a pretty, young neck Don t you feel that it belongs there? Almost as if it has become a part of you?

Sarah nodded she was hypnotised by the compulsive tone of his voice and the heady feeling of just possession imparted to her by the collar

If you can meet my price, the collar might remain there His tone was gentler now, almost cajoling Like that of a parent attempting to coax a young child into making the right decision

What What is your price? Sarah s voice caught in her throat

Even as she asked the question, the answer was already forming in her mind Her stomach churned in anticipatory revulsion His words burned into her ears with heart stopping clarity And she knew that, for her, only one response was possible

She undressed in front of the full length wardrobe mirror unsuccessfully seeking reassurance from the familiar appearance of her lithe body and trim waist. Even the sight of her flawless legs emerging from the anonymity of her grey business suit failed to impart the usual thrill of self-satisfaction

Divesting the old man of his mildewed garments required even more determination Sarah could not recall ever having performed a more unpleasant task. She tried to detach herself from reality of the situation by concentrating on the glittering array of figures which spun through her head like a protective mantra Eventually the job was done and she shuddered at the feel of his scaly hide scraping against the suppleness of her skin

*Ugh I feel sick It makes my skin crawl when he touches me like that — and he smells Oh my God It s disgusting I can t believe I m really doing this At least he won t really be able to do anything not at his age Pathetic A few minutes of fumbling and groping should satisfy him — please don t let him touch over me again or I shall be sick Don t think about him Think about the collar think about Oh, my God! What s he doing — he can t! No, for Christ s sake no Please! Oh, oh my God!*

Sarah genuinely had not believed that the old man would be capable of the act She was, therefore unprepared for the steely hardness which seared its way into her A wave of revulsion swept over her entire body His face came down towards her She tried to turn her head away but his gaze locked with hers, and burned into her skull

Suddenly the entire world seemed to disappear in a burst of incandescent pain She was torn apart in an explosion of sensation which took her to the brink of excruciating agony before delivering her mercifully into oblivion

She finally came round with an incredible sensation of weakness Her hand felt like a lead weight as she explored the bed She was alone

Her ears detected curiously muffled sounds like someone moving behind a blanket of cotton wool. Her eyes refused to focus properly

Something moved across her blurred field of vision By squinting and using all her powers of concentration Sarah managed to bring the image into a sort of hazy focus It was a girl She was dressing hurriedly inelegantly — like a man

*That s my suit,* Sarah thought weakly. The girl, now fully dressed approached the bed and leaned over her

*Where have I seen that face?* It was a sweet face, innocent looking, utterly free of lines suffused with youth and vitality The eyes gazed down on Sarah and glowed with a penetrating inner radiance One exquisitely manicured hand brushed away a stray wisp of dark blonde hair as the girl spoke

I am sorry my dear But sometimes the only realistic option is to change to something new You see old things become so worn out and inconvenient!

The girl straightened up A shaft of light from the window outlined her upper body Something almost hidden by the stiff white collar of her blouse threw the light back in a glittering golden gleam

In panic Sarah reached with numb fingers for the object that should have adorned her own neck but she could only find folds of sagging flesh

A wave of horror passed through her body like an electric current She struggled to get up from the bed, but the girl put one hand on her chest and pushed her back effortlessly Her touch was gentle compassionate — almost a caress

Those penetrating brown eyes regarded her pityingly for a second You came here with the intention of obtaining an old man s possessions You may have them They are yours The house and all it contains A gift I have no further use for them She paused for a moment as if in thought And you may find that you have need of them

The girl took a couple of unsteady steps away from the bed With a frown she stooped and removed the unfamiliar high heels, she winked at Sarah as she strode athletically from the room

With an effort, Sarah raised her head from the pillow in time to witness Fonica s exit She couldn t help but admire the supple grace with which the girl moved A brief thought arose, unbidden, from her subconscious as her head sank back onto the pillow in exhaustion *A body like that must be worth a fortune!*

**"It can become yours... if you are willing to pay the price"**

# CARL BOSCZEK IS DEAD

## STEPHEN HAND

No too clichéd Okay then, how about 'The Late Great Carl Bosczek ? No That s too formal Aww what the hell il doesn t matter anyway It's the ed s problem

Editor?

That s a bit optimistic isn't it? This piece'll probably never see the light of day and even il it does it ll be presented as a nice little scandal piece in some cheap tabloid. *Delvings into the Mind of a Madman* or something similar

Oh come on Steve — get your act together and cut the crap It s not as il you ve got all the time in the world, is it?

Okay

Here goes

Shit, I hate these things Give me a blank page any day Some writers have trouble getting their first words down I have trouble talking to Dictaphones Obviously something to do with the sound of my own voice, some kind of hang up Though when I say Dictaphone I really mean cassette player ll s not even one of those Walkman things Well Walkman is actually a trade name for a specific brand of portable cassette player (so s Dictaphone I think) so I really shouldn t refer to them as Walkmans Or should that be Walkmen? Whatever Mine isn t portable It s a massive thing which you die carrying

If Mandy were here she would va killed me by now Nothing irritates her more than when I go off at tangents from the main thrust of a conversation Another acquaintance would have berated me for the use of the word thrust , with all its connotations of masculine dominance

Whatever

**"Well, in the immortal words of Dennis Potter, they can just 'piss off'"**

I admit I am a shade fastidious in such matters but that s just tough I m not going to sit around spouting generalisations for any bugger It's just not me If I say something which I feel requires some qualification, then I supply it That few times I gloss over issues, I get stress That said, I do strive to find a compromise between maintaining the flow of a conversation and not having a nervous breakdown

Right

So here I am with my cassette recorder, talking into the condensed microphone I m sorry you've had to put up with all this, but at least it s helped me to relax No doubt some journalists would accuse me of being unprofessional in my approach Well In the immortal words of Dennis Potter, they can just piss off

All right then Here goes

This is Stephen Hand dictating a commissioned piece for *House of Phantasmagoria* magazine, on the 26th of August 1988 Greg, I m sorry this is on audio rather than disc but given the circumstances I m sure you ll forgive me I've got to do this as fast as I can and typing would just take too long ll does mean however that you ll have to do a bit more — make that a lot more — subbing than usual As for payment God knows Anyway, I d better get on with it before the police arrive

This is it

What you are about to read may seem incredible Is that too corny? No Leave it in Right What you are about to read may astound you but it is the truth Carl Bosczek is dead and you can be the first to read all about ll here in this *Hot!* exclusive

Originally this space was to be devoted to an interview with the great man himself but given our unique insight into his untimely demise and the lack of any other interview material with him we believe it to be more fitting to present a tribute to his amazing career A tribute that ends with one man s perception of the bizarre events surrounding his tragic death

As you all know Carl Bosczek was the universally acknowledged king of horror special effects (FX) He has dominated the last three decades with make up techniques and FX stunts which have left his peers standing Sadly yet understandably he never took on a disciple and so his great secret talent has followed him to the grave

Bosczek first appeared on the movie scene in

1957 with *Night of the Sasquatch* a Canadian B-movie which many many critics hailed as a work ahead of its time From total obscurity Boszczek was made Head of Special Effects and Make Up and rightly so for even now many people find it difficult to watch that Dormobile yarrée ending

Crossing the border Boszczek worked on films for a number of US Independents most notably the 3D psychedelic montage of Edgar Allan Poe, gang violence and surf music *The Pit and the Pendulum* Filmed for United American Pictures in 1965 this overpowering movie offers 86 minutes of unbelievable Three dimensional Splatter which necessitated the distribution of barf bags amongst Sixties audiences across the States

By this stage in his career Carl was making a bigger name for himself, not least for his secrecy *Variety* writer Mike Foswell discovered that Boszczek actually directed lit and filmed all his FX work himself Foswell also managed to lay his hands on Boszczek s contract for *Six Foot Under* only to find that it stipulated Boszczek should have complete control of all the FX scenes His method of working demanded total secrecy, he never allowed anybody but the necessary actors onto a set when the FX were being shot and none of those actors have ever revealed his methods

However Boszczek had to ensure that his work fitted the overall style of a picture containing his FX There was a clause in each contract stating that if there was a break in continuity of style, the scenes would have to be reshot and the additional cost would be deducted from Boszczek s salary This clause was never invoked and this led many critics to wonder why Boszczek never took up directing himself as he clearly had a good grasp of a whole range of shooting styles

These critics never knew the size of his pay checks In fact they knew very little about this reputedly quiet and generous man who only ever gave three interviews in his entire career and who was fiercely protective of his private life

Boszczek went mainstream in the late Sixties with a number of big budget classics which made him more of a known quantity He stunned audience everywhere with the quality and clarity of his work in greats such as *The Earwig Curse of the Reptile-Man* and *Dracula Bloody Dracula*

His work on *Dracula* inspired Bob Martin (now working on *January 1st A New Year*) also to pursue a vocation of fake blood and exploding corpses In a recent interview Bob recalled his affection for Boszczek s work.

It was like well heck, what can I say? I used to watch these things when I was a kid Secretly, on the late night networks while ma and pa were asleep And when I saw *Bloody Dracula* at the drive-in, I thought My God This is where it s at I mean you look at the chapel scene The guy runs into view, bang goes the giant stake and whoosh there are bits of him everywhere I've watched that clip a million times slow motion freeze-frame, you name it and I still can t find the cut The edit is so good you think the camera s still on And the limbs This is before latex as we know it today Before modern prosthetics As far as I m concerned, Boszczek s the man

Having made a comfortable living working for the majors, Boszczek went underground at the turn of the decade he worked under a variety of pseudonyms and at one stage he even funded a couple of college productions neither of which made it onto the main circuits

Many of his followers claim to have spotted Boszczek s touch in a number of other films from that period science fiction war movies and even westerns supposedly contain scenes of Boszczek Splatter Typically the man himself never admitted or denied making such non-genre flicks and only reinforced for sure to work on that most influential of all film series the *Zombie Ninja* trilogy

Made in the early Seventies, these three films were primarily the brain children of Enrico Pagliacci a spaghetti western director who conceived directed, scripted and produced the series And it was while Pagliacci was involved in some private fund raising in Beverly Hills that the two men met.

There is no denying the pace style and quality of these films and it must be said that they form an unbelievable showcase for the most visual daring and impossible effects that Boszczek has ever done The gore is so realistic and outrageous that numerous bodies both here and in the US, tried to get the films banned Indeed, while the *Zombie* trilogy is still the main source of inspiration for most horror cellulold today some have labelled it the pioneer of another more repulsive kind of film, namely, the snuff movie

The American press had a field day with Boszczek who had done nothing more to incur their wrath than keep them at a distance All the same, the ensuing witch hunt led to a federal investigation and a rare appearance by Pagliacci and Boszczek on the *Johnny Carson Show* where the two men defended their finest work As expected, Pagliacci did most of the talking but the slim dark, moustached Boszczek came across as a modest and intelligent man The official inquiry cleared both men, who then set in motion a battery of law suits against a multitude of newspapers and commenced a legal battle which lasted for almost a decade

All the same, this and other experiences in the land of the free left a sour taste in Boszczek's mouth He upped and moved across the Atlantic in 1977 when, ironically the third of the *Zombie Ninja* pics *Dawn of the Dead* was making its London debut Boszczek s experiences also led him to script produce and direct that infamous '78 black-and white sickie *The Awful Dead*.

Targeted with scathing directness at the tiresome charade of US presidential election

**"When I saw Bloody Dracula at the drive-in, I thought, 'My God. This is where it's at'"**

campaigns The film portrayed the effects on a small Midwestern town of a supernatural disease cutely called the election bug Its victims wake to find themselves transformed into badge-wearing, pennant waving mindless morons who roam the streets and stumble from one arena of carnage to another

*The Awful Dead* was Bosczek s first critical rejection. Some thought the political allegories were too facile some labelled his gore too predictable and others simply called the film a pile of crap Perhaps surprisingly his direction also came in for some harsh criticism Another of Bosczek s devotees Mikel Stapps (currently overseeing FX on the remake of *The Blob*) once commented.

"There s no denying the FX genius of the man but I think he came to believe too much in the public image of himself. Though he never went public, whole volumes were printed about him. All the usual anecdotes about the secrecy, the privacy the complete control of his work, the infamous contracts — which I m sure were nothing more than calculated hype — I think he came to believe all this that he was more than the actors, the director the best boy and even the assistant grip *Awful Dead* showed that he thought he could do it all himself Even his FX suffered as a result of this megalomania

His previous underground stuff was different, it was a real expression of something genuine But *Awful Dead* was a knee-jerk reaction to the bad press over the snuff thing, and a reaction to his press image — the well-spoken gore fiend the paradox He'd been getting this free print for years and now they had turned against him, which I think must have hurt him — or at least hurt his image — more than it should have done

**"The gore is so realistic and outrageous that numerous bodies, both here and in the US, tried to get the films banned"**

Bosczek spent two years hidden away in his Henley on-Thames manor house before consenting to help out on the highly controversial *Paddy McGinty's Goat*

This 1981 French film was banned in many countries including Ireland where all the location sequences were shot because of one particular scene which oddly enough did not feature Bosczek s work The scene in question shows the title s eponymous manifestation of Satan forcing a devout Catholic teenage girl to swallow contraceptive pills

Followers of Bosczek once more frowned on the presence of a political dimension to his work a dimension which Bosczek argued, was part of everything he did, at one level or another

Another hiatus followed, leading many to regard Bosczek as history even to the extent of delineating 1964-76 as his Golden Age Then out of the blue, he participated in a phone interview for an English music magazine *Kerrplunkk* which was running a two-issue review of early Splatter The conversation yielded this revealing insight of the man behind the splat

I've always had trouble expressing myself verbally — in conversation or in writing. Even this is proving a little difficult I've always tried to express myself in what I do in my work in my effects If I've ever gone overboard by saying making too literal a statement then the public has the right to tell me where to get off Having said that, I try to maintain a balance in what I do and yes, I've always believed that I make heavy metal motion pictures

Three more years of silence followed before Bosczek shocked the genre world in 1986 by joining the newly formed English horror film company, Malleus Now five movies old this hugely successful group combines all the Gothic finesse of British films of the Sixties with the visceral subtlety of a brick in the teeth

Bosczek was back — and with style!

Whatever the behind the scenes arrangements, Bosczek s Malleus FX were as good as they had ever been and regained a certain flair and excitement that had been absent for years And it was this surprise comeback which set us at *Hell* thinking that now was the time to try and get another interview with the man himself

However, this proved to be no easy task. I had to go through a multitude of company and agency switchboards before learning that the man was as difficult to nail down as ever There was only one thing for it

Malleus are currently filming *My Wife Was a Teenage Phantom of the Opera* a project that Bosczek would almost certainly be working on

So what else could I do but try to ambush him outside the gates of Malleus studios deep in the heart of woody Hertfordshire?

For a week or so my efforts came to nothing

Then came the payoff

Before I continue I must stress that much of what follows is impressionistic, in other words, I have endeavoured to present my thoughts as and when they occurred I think you will agree that the unique nature of the interview demands this unusual indulgence

I was standing, discreetly huddled in the rain, clutching a Thermos a pack of soggy chicken sandwiches and a copy of the previous day s *Evening Standard* It was growing dark and a multitude of people were passing out through the studio gates I recognised more than a few of them and so hid my face I was disgusted in a manner which I thought typical of the average autograph hunter It must have been pretty effective, as I was uniformly ignored

One hour — two hours — passed and then I heard a sharp voice call melodramatically through the fencing, Mr Hand I presume?"

I looked up from my newspaper and found myself face-to-face with Carl Bosczek

He smiled and extended a hand How many days have you been hanging around here, three?

Erm eight I felt like a jerk, my interviewer s composure dripping away like so much Kensington Gore

Well he prompted don't just stand there

Come on in He motioned the guard to let me through and in I went tiptoeing between the puddles

We walked quietly, side-by-side towards the main studio and I tried to get some impression of the man Boszczek had aged well, the only difference I could detect from the few photos I d seen of him was the addition of a few pounds and a clutch of grey above each temple He was taller than I had expected and very self-assured in his demeanour possessing that confidence common to all rich people

Then we were there Inside the glorified giant Portakabin

Welcome to the Morgue of Malleus he bellowed

Now I m no stranger to film sets but the scene before me almost took my breath away It was an exquisitely detailed and incredibly well rendered section of a Gothic cathedral A couple of props lay here and there but there was no one around A single arc lamp illuminated the corner of the building we occupied Two chairs stood facing one another I sat in one and he took the other Then before I could speak he said Forgive my malicious streak but I was wondering how long you would wait to catch sight of me'

Sorry?

Oh Mr Hand your enquiries at the agents offices et cetera have gone as unnoticed as a cowpat in Harrods.

That s my job I shrugged feeling unaccountably guilty

Of course

I didn t like his smile He offered me a cigarette I don t smoke thanks.

Yes it is a bad habit My GP has been telling me to quit for years It s playing havoc with my blood pressure To tell you the truth, I haven't really got that long to live I ve had two strokes already

I offered him a chicken sandwich It was his turn to decline so I pigged out solitaire, shocked at this candid admission of his ill health.

But you don t want to hear that do you?

Au contraire I m sure my readers would like to read anything and everything about you

You re too kind

He went off in search of an ashtray and I assuaged my second sandwich God it was rank.

Well he said on his return seeing that you are so interested in this, the twilight of my career and as you ve waited so long to speak to me what can I do but grant you the interview of interviews?'

Come again?

That was twice he d thrown me off guard and I liked his smile even less

The interview that finally gets to the bottom of Carl Boszczek, exhaustive frank and complete The one that lays the enigma to rest One you ll be able to sell again and again and again

Off the record — why me?

Two reasons. I've read your columns They re enthusiastic well balanced and sympathetic, but they also display a degree of critical sensibility Secondly, you happen to be here I've got to set the record straight before I hit the Pearly Gates'

Something was wrong

I sat there waiting for the punch-line but could only manage a comment that was pretty crass, even for me

Your accent is remarkably English

Thank you

I couldn t believe it The man was here prepared to spill the beans, his life, his loves his beliefs, everything It was like a dream come true With shaking fingers I grabbed hold of my notebook and left it open on my lap I held a pencil in my right hand and yet another of those evil sandwiches in my left. He waited patiently

Okay then, Mr Boszczek..

Carl

Carl Let s start at the beginning Your first film was the Ontario big-foot feature in the late Fifties.

No, I d worked on *Invasion of the Ga Ga Gorillas* in 52, and a number of trash items in between.

I didn t know that

No you wouldn t

Well how did you get started in Splatter effects? It was hardly a popular, or even known, line of work then was it?

No but you see, given my ability, there wasn t much else I could do And I had such a unique talent that I was determined to make my fortune out of it It s the same talent that has made life so difficult for me

In what way?

In every way It's affected my personal life, my work and my relationship with the rest of the film industry And if I don t get it off my chest now I never will and I ll die half insane You see.. I just have to tell someone Maybe that s a function of the human ego I don t know

Don t you feel this is a rather dramatic way to discuss horror make-up? Surely any anxiety is of your own making, with your demand for secrecy and such?'

You don t understand I can t let anybody watch me work I have to do it all myself'

What about the actors?'

There are no actors in my effects scenes There never have been

What?

Unprofessional One should never show surprise

What you see on the screen is always me No matter how many people die male or female It s always me — in costume Sure, there are scenes where I just make people up for multiple shots or mass wipe-outs but for the motion effects, the hard core gore where you see the thing in the process of happening.. that s me

But has all this secrecy been necessary? I mean, there was no one who could touch you

**"Some have labelled it the pioneer of another more repulsive kind of film; namely, the snuff movie"**

until at least the late Seventies

There never will be anyone to touch me. They don't have the talent.

Another chilling smile. Perhaps it was his arrogance I could smell.

Again, why the secrecy?

Because of my talent. You see.

He stopped and took a deep breath. I didn't know what was coming, but I sensed bad vibes.

You see, ever since I was a child, I've had this strange ability.

Oh God! The guy's a weirdo.

This talent, as I call it. Don't ask me how, but I discovered that just by willing it, I could make any injury appear on my body, anywhere at all, with no pain and no matter how bad it looked.

You don't really.

He ignored me, so I just carried on making notes. I mean it was still something I could sell.

I could do anything, anything at all. Now most people would have panicked, but not me. I didn't mention it to anyone, not even the doctor. I just made it my secret and planned how best I could use it. It a very thing and sometimes, for instance when I have nightmares, it happens all by itself which is why I can never get close to anyone. The strain of keeping it all to myself has been unbearable. You can't appreciate what a relief it is for me to tell someone at last.

Well, I ventured, you must admit your story's a little strange.

Sure. I think that's why I'm also slightly unhinged.

And he said that in all seriousness.

But let me show you, he smiled.

What a giveaway! It was all leading up to some practical joke. Teach the persistent interviewer a lesson he'll never forget. I almost managed a laugh, so suddenly had the sense of relief flooded over me. All the same, a wodge of bread was still stuck in my throat.

Here. Let me take you through some of my specialties. Vampire bites.

Wow! How did he do that?

Stigmata. Considered tasteless in some countries.

Fantastic.

Slit throat.

Neat.

Gouged eyes, hanging eyeballs.

Oh my God.

Pneumatic drill churned stomach.

Where's the exit?

He did 'em. Every last one of 'em, just as he said he could. I saw it all with my own eyes. There was no way he could fake it, and it only took an instant for a wound to appear or vanish, the appropriate area of his body just moved, tore or whatever, as if the injury was actually being inflicted by some invisible device.

Machine gun shots.

His body jerked, spraying blood and stuff over me and and my sandwich. I froze, bottom jaw sagging.

When he re-formed, all the blood and stuff just zipped back into place. It didn't even leave a stain on my clothes.

And check this... he screamed, 'Total Splat-out!'

His head dropped onto his lap, then rolled onto the floor. His arms just flew off somewhere in space. I didn't know where, cause I was feeling kind of faint. His legs split open at the knees, calves and feet falling forwards thighs to the side. His body severed from groin to neck and his guts spilled out, his skin peeled inside out. Then the monstrous remains just plopped onto the floor.

I was up to my knees in red, honking up my sandwiches and making sure that the acrid yellow puddles landed somewhere behind me. I dunno, but maybe if my vomit had mixed with Boszczek', then something terrible would have happened, you know like in *The Earwig*.

I pulled myself together and wiped the mess off my lips with my sleeve. I just could not believe it. It was the most gross, sick thing I had ever seen. To think that I'd spent money watching this very effect in Boszczek's 1963 cheapie *Jackie the Ripper*. And I still don't know why I didn't collapse or run... I suppose the horror just hadn't had time to sink in.

A minute or two passed and gave me time to fight back another wave of nausea. Then I noticed something. He hadn't reassembled himself again.

My voice sounded weak, pathetic.

'Great... neat trick, Carl, erm... some talent!'

His pancreas stared me mutely in the eye, his spleen showed no sign of moving.

Right. I've seen it. Come on. We have more things to discuss, Carl?'

Nothing.

CARL!'

Dead.

CARRRRLLLL!!!'

**"His body jerked, spreying blood end stuff over me and my sandwich"**

The bastard was dead. He'd done his effect and dropped dead. He must've had a stroke or something, or.

My God! He's bloody dead! And I'm here. He's dead and I'm the only one who knows his secret, his talent. He's dead and his guts are all over the floor and I'm here. He's dead and I'm alive up to my knees in his blood.

I was simultaneously overcome by a feeling panic and a sense of indignation.

'You thoughtless, selfish bastard!'

His dead mouth gawped moronically, his eyes two mocking haemorrhages.

Bastard!

I kicked his head, scoring a goal through one of the mock arch windows, and it was just then that the cleaning lady entered stage left and screamed.

So, that's it.

In a nutshell.

Take it or leave it.

It looks as though I've finished just in time, too — there's somebody at the door. Now put yourself in my shoes. What would you tell them?

# CHAMPION

**By J A Hall**

Rolgar awoke suddenly from a sound sleep knowing that this was the day He floated down from the sleeping rail and settled by the table As he did so there was a faint tap at the door and the new little maid came in with his breakfast which she placed on the table

When the maid turned to go Rolgar said Wait

She paused, knowing quite well what he wanted

'What is your name?' asked Rolgar

'Sharvlen Lord

A pretty name said Rolgar stroking her side with a tentacle

Sharvlen put up only a token resistance, and afterwards they ate breakfast together Rolgar noted with some amusement that there were two portions of everything

Just as they were finishing their meal, there was another knock at the door, this was louder and more peremptory In response to Rolgar s call the door opened and one of the King s messengers came in

They are here? asked Rolgar

Yes They will be taken to the Palace for the formal reception

'I shall come at once'

And with that Rolgar left, stopping only to make a fluttering gesture in the direction of the maid a gesture which meant I shall see you again

*****

**"We are an ancient culture' said the King, 'and some of us have little taste for contact with strangers"**

'Ready, Mr Ambassador?' asked Hawkins as the ship moved out of orbit for the final descent

I believe so' said Merritt the white-haired, distinguished golden boy matured in the service of the Federation well-suited by birth education and experience for this, the most important task ever entrusted to an Ambassador

The ship settled gently on the ground, It was a unique event in the history of a planet which had never had a human being on its soil before

Merritt had been a touch stand-offish on the journey but now when the thing was so near he felt disposed to talk

A first for them Captain,' he said, 'and a first for us too

The first non human world?'

The first we've found with a life form of comparable intelligence to our own — and, of course the first we've tried to persuade to join the Federation

They had all seen the sensoms, but the reality still came as something of a shock. The Dayash were beings in the shape of two metre diameter spheres of opaque jelly, each sphere had a single eye in a range of colours in its centre and a mass of tentacles hanging down underneath Presumably thought Chuck Mason the third officer, we must look like nothing on Earth — or wherever — to them.

The Ambassador was accompanied by his personal staff, and Captain Hawkins had decided that he must have some moral support as well, which is why Chuck had gotten to go planetside. The exec and second mate were too valuable they had remained with the ship just in case Hawkins had hesitated a little the other

two were wearing more impressive uniforms than Chuck Hell he didn't want the ship a company to look cheap! Eventually he had settled on giving Chuck honorary ADC status, lots of unofficial gold braid hanging off the left shoulder Hawkins and Chuck agreed it looked good

The effect was rather spoilt by the fact that the Dayash wore no clothes, and so were unimpressed by uniforms Nevertheless, it made the humans feel better

Dayash nudity extended to the King himself he wore no crown, no robes nothing He seemed indistinguishable from the rest of his people

Your Majesty said Merritt, once the introductions were out of the way you have had time to consider the formal offer from the Federation that you should join us May we now know your decision?

The King who, along with most of the Dayash, had been studying StandEng made a slight fluttering of the tentacles which meant 'Don't rush me,' but this was lost on the humans

We are an ancient culture said the King at last, and, to speak plainly some of us have little taste for contact with alien that is with strangers Yet there are those who see a lot of potential benefits in this contact We have been unable to decide what to do for the best.

I understand, said Merritt automatically 'but has your Majesty not the casting vote?'

I beg your pardon?'

You can t make a decision yourself?'

The King fluttered his eighteenth and thirty third tentacles, which would have meant not in these trousers, if he had worn any

The little King, he explained, does not, perhaps have quite the same meaning for us that it does for you I am more of a spokesman for the whole race No, we simply cannot make up our mind so we ve decided that the matter should be settled in the old way

The old way?

Generations ago, said the King, 'the Dayash came to the conclusion that war was insane We began to settle disputes — there were still disputes then before the different tribes became one — by single combat.

'Single combat,' repeated Merritt

Each party to the dispute appoints a Champion, said the King patiently, and the Champions fight One is killed — his side loses. One lives — his side wins

'And you propose we should use this method to decide whether or not you join the Federation?'

Just so Our Champion, Rolgar — he gestured to a member of his entourage who looked, to Chuck, just the same as all the others, will fight for staying out. Your Champion will fight for our going in

But we have no Champion,' said Merritt.

Yes we have, said Chuck.

'You? Merritt and Hawkins chorused in unison Before Chuck could answer, Hawkins pulled his comrades to one side and asked in a low tone Just what do you intend?'

'Look, said Chuck, It's obvious I'm the weapons officer, I m more or less expendable Do I need to list all my qualifications?'

'I guess not, said Hawkins You re right, of course, you are probably as good a choice as any

Hold it, Merritt broke in, how do we know whether your qualifications or experience will be of any relevance? These characters might use swords or bare fists bare.. tentacles

He turned to the King

Your Majesty, he asked in a treacly voice which betrayed none of the emotion he felt 'may I ask what weapons the Champions use?

'Traditionally, they would use the xlanth, a sword-edged flail which is exceedingly difficult to master The inexperienced frequently kill themselves whilst learning to handle it.'

I see said Merritt

Of course, the King continued, that was a long time ago There have been considerable technical advances since then

So now?'

Now they use scout ships fitted with interstellar drive and armed with plasma inducers

'Ah

'Rolgar will instruct your appointed Champion, said the King airily 'Naturally should you decline to take part in the contest then you will simply lose by default

Certainly not, Chuck put in, 'I'll give it a go'

**"Naturally, should you decline to take part in the contest, you will simply lose by default"**

*****

The drive and controls of the scout ship proved quite easy to manage especially after a little tentacle-to-hand adaptation, but the plasma inducer was more tricky Working on the laser principle, it boosted two separate microwave frequency beams to an intensity at which they turned any solid object, at their point of intersection, into a plasma The whole trick was in targetting the thing, and there was a screen with two crosses for angle and range. When the crosses and target coincided, you fired Simple — on land

In space, it required some practice And the day appointed for the contest was fast approaching

No problem, said Chuck to anyone who asked 'I've got the hang of it, I just need a bit more practice

Rolgar was dubious. It has taken me many years of continuous practice to master it,' he told Chuck, I am not sure you will be ready.

'Chicken, huh?'

Rolgar thought for a while then said 'I believe my concern is based on the fact that I have grown to like you, and shall not enjoy killing you.'

Chuck did not reply

*****

Ready or not, the day arrived

Since the contest was to take place twenty miles above the surface of the planet, there would be no spectators. Rolgar said this was traditional. Chuck was rather glad, he had an idea that this was going to be tough enough as it was.

Although they had covered the handling of the ship and the operation of the plasma inducer Rolgar had said nothing about the conduct and etiquette of the contest, so Chuck decided it was now the time to ask.

No rules, said Rolgar, we simply try to kill each other. Eventually one of us succeeds, and returns to claim victory.

What if both Champions get killed?

It happened — once,' said Rolgar.

What happened?'

In the combat? No one knows. They just got another two Champions and re-enacted the encounter. You do realise that you're just not good enough, don't you?

Thrown by this sudden change of subject Chuck forgot his spirit of bravado. 'I know, he said, that is. I'm not sure, now you mention it, but even if I'm not good enough, I represent humanity and I'm not going to back down. Though I will admit I'm scared.

Rolgar fluttered a movement which said 'Well done' but Chuck missed it.

It was time to go. Chuck left the planet's surface first, ten minutes before Rolgar. The Dayash told him that this was the privilege of the challenger, but they were lying. Normally the Champions tossed for it, going first gave a slight advantage, and they reckoned Chuck would need one.

Chuck arrived at the appointed spot, an easily recognised old communications satellite and cruised around waiting. Before long he saw Rolgar's ship coming towards him, and moved to the top surface of the satellite where he might not be seen right away.

He was not at all happy about this contest, he had no desire to kill someone who was not only a willing and able teacher but also a friend. However it now dawned on Chuck that everyone except him was absolutely serious about this business. Rolgar would kill him if he could, and what is more the future of the Federation, perhaps of all humanity, would be affected by what happened here. It was important that the Dayash join. It would prevent the Federation becoming a cosy little club for humanity. Chuck decided that, come what may, he would do his best to kill Rolgar.

Rolgar's ship had slowed down and was now about a mile below well within range, so Chuck moved out slowly and cautiously. He had plenty of time to line up angle and range controls, and fire. The beams left only the faintest of traces which were easily missed if you happened to be careless, but bright enough for Rolgar to see and gently evade them. Behind him the beams met with just the merest sign of the enormous energy that had been released, a slight blueness in the grey of space.

Rolgar seemed to be manouvering, and Chuck guessed he was going to fire back. Yes, that slight trace was visible as the beams came for him. Chuck moved back behind the satellite and was able to observe the beams meeting close up. They were slightly more impressive

**"My concern is based on the fact that I have grown to like you, and shall not enjoy killing you"**

this close than from a mile away, but they still didn't seem like much to worry about, although Chuck knew that their appearance was deceptive.

Now Rolgar was moving again, away from the vicinity of the satellite and out into space. Chuck followed he did not intend to fire again until he knew where Rolgar was going and what he intended.

They travelled sixty miles or so than Chuck realised what Rolgar was heading for a huge heap of scrap metal floating in space. It looked as though it had once been a dock for deep-space vessels, with repair facilities and living accommodation all abandoned long ago, with no attempt made to salvage anything. Once Rolgar moved in amongst that lot he would be impossible to find. Besides which there was every possibility that Rolgar knew his way around, he might have been here every week for the whole of his life.

On impulse, Chuck targetted and fired, but Rolgar easily evaded him. Chuck wondered how true through the dome-shaped windows there was uninterrupted vision all around, but Chuck found it difficult enough to see everything with two eyes, and Rolgar only had one. Instinct?

Rolgar had slowed right down, Chuck did the same and tried to see where the other ship might be going. Rolgar headed into what looked like a dock but Chuck decided that he didn't want to go in amongst the tangled heap of scrap so he moved to a position where he had some solid metal underneath him.

He waited twenty minutes by his watch but it felt like forever. Then he saw Rolgar moving out again below him he almost had a chance to fire, but the angle was wrong.

Carefully Chuck eased out from behind the twisted metal, and as he did so Rolgar began to move faster away from the heap of debris.

Chuck had to speed up to follow him, and soon they were tearing along Rolgar weaving faster and faster so that Chuck could never get a straight shot at him.

Then he was gone.

Chuck blinked then turned his head as he realised that the Dayash had dived spun and come out on his tail. Sure enough there he was.

Rolgar gripped the trigger as the crosses coincided on his screen, saw before him the man he had grown to like. He hesitated —

Generations ago, the Dayash Champions had often hesitated at the last moment. After all, there were only a few Champions, they tended to know each other, very often trained together and took an interest in one another's fights. So they sometimes found it difficult to kill someone they liked and admired. But the rules were inflexible a fight was to the death. The Dayash had overcome this difficulty quite simply by joining the whole race with the mind of the Champion at the moment of victory. This had a twofold result. It made for a clean kill, and it had a cathartic effect that proved very useful to a race which generally deplored violence. At that moment Rolgar was the Dayash.

Then he fired.

Chuck's ship disintegrated in a flash of hot gas, which dispersed immediately. Rolgar flew back to the space station and landed on top of it. There he sat, loat in thought for some considerable time, before going home.

*****

'So,' said Merritt. 'That about does it. I shall tell my people that you do not wish to join us. This I deeply regret, it would have been of benefit to both our races.'

'On the contrary,' said the King, 'we do wish to join you.'

'But we lost the combat!'

'Precisely. Your Champion knew he could never win, he knew that he would be killed, yet he went ahead anyway. We are not afraid to admit that we might have been wrong, only a fool makes a virtue of never changing his mind. We admire bravery, and your Champion's death has converted many who were most strongly opposed to our joining you. Besides such foolhardiness tends to run in species, and can take a less pleasant form. We realise that, should we not join you now, your race will return at some time in the future, and next time you might not behave so reasonably. No, we shall join your Federation. Stay here for a while — there will be a certain amount of formal debauchery.'

*****

The little maid, Sharvien, stepped into Rolgar's room, pushing a baby bubble ahead of her.

'What's this?' asked Rolgar.

'My son, Lord.'

'And mine, Wife,' said Rolgar formally.

'Thank you, Husband. You will need to name him.'

'That is easy, I shall call him Chuck.'

His new wife fluttered in complete horror, mingled with dissent, but said only 'That is certainly an unusual name.'

'It was the name of a brave man,' Rolgar explained, and if we are to associate with these people we might as well get used to their names. Perhaps one day they will use our names for their children.'

'Yes. And perhaps one day our son will be a Champion.'

'Never,' said Rolgar firmly, 'It's no job for anyone with a shred of decency, and besides, things will change as we get to know humanity better. There will be less call for Champions. I want him to be a poet.'

'A poet?'

'Yes. There's more money in it, and more respect. And it's the sort of job where having an unusual name is almost certainly a guarantee of fame and fortune.'

J A HALL was born in Yorkshire in 1946 and has lived there ever since. He worked for many years in the scientific civil service and has been writing for some time, but has only recently turned his attention to fantasy/SF. His interests include collecting books, growing bonsai trees, sailing Thames barges and exploring old cities.

**"We are not afraid to admit that we might have been wrong, only a fool makes a virtue of never changing his mind"**

# FIVE PAST FOUR

**DAVID L DUGGINS**

Mike wanted to know what time it was That was the only thing about riding with Mike he asked what the time was about every twenty minutes

Time for you to get your own fucking watch Jeff growled And if you ask me again, you can walk the rest of the way back to New York.

Mike didn t give him any shit in reply He was pretty cool except for always hassling about the time

Where are we, anyway? Mike asked finally

Jeff shrugged Don t know Virginia, maybe Still one hell of a long way from home

'But not far away from rich Mike said He sang a chorus of White Christmas Jeff laughed, nodding He glanced up into the rearview mirror The interstate traffic was light for a Sunday

Is the shit okay?' he asked Mike He couldn't see Mike s face but he figured Mike was probably rolling his eyes, h guessed he was asking that question about as often as Mike asked what time it was

'Yeah, yeah it s okay It ain t going anywhere'

'Check it again anyway Jeff snapped 'It s only about a million and a half on the street, you know

Yeah, Mike said disgustedly, leaning over the front seat Reaching under the corner of the back seat he flipped a hidden latch The seat tipped up to reveal a compartment filled to the brim with plastic bags containing a fine white powder

Yeah it s a million and a half Mike said Closer to two if we stretch it But it ain't got legs, Jeff It's not gonna get up and walk away

'Don t count on it' Jeff snorted You re damned right we re gonna stretch it he thought Another half mil in our pockets thanks to a little help from a lot of powdered baby formula. 'I protect my interests

'Yeah Mike said

'When we get home and unload this haul you can go out and buy yourself a four thousand dollar Rolex, man We get this shit on

the street, and I won t heve to listen to you ask me the time and you won t have to listen to me ask you to check the stuff Until then, I'm gonna worry

Yeah ' Mike said 'I m gettin' hungry, man. Can we grab a bite somewhere?'

Jeff sighed Sure,' he said I'll find us a quickie mart and we can grab and go Can you heng with that?'

Thet's cool.

Really things hadn i gone badly at all, Jeff mused Not bad for a weeks work

— and not bad for their first deal Leave for Florida from New York wiih the cash in an envelope on Friday, drive a couple of days, meei wiih the dude late Monday night party ii through until Tuesday morning, get laid, hand the dude ihe envelope, drive the car around back, load up and get gone Three days back, and help yourself to a little of the merchandise, just to keep the momentum going If the going gets really grungy, stop for some z s ai the local flesbag A day or two either way, who cares? Jeff ihought What you re looking at is a healihy profit

Pretty sweet.

**"Something cold and slimy seemed to inch its way up his back, finally lodging in his throat"**

His stomach growled He spaited the skyscraper-sized sign of an off-ramp market, flipped on the turn signal and eased out of the inierstate flow, decelerating onto the exit ramp 'I m fucking senously hungry man, he said

No doubt, Mike said 'My stomach's eating my leg

'I m gonna buy my own market when we unload,' Jeff said as he pulled into the parking ioi All we'll stock is brew, rubbers and blow

We could run a whorehouse out of the back, Mike said with a grin

Outstanding! Give the people what they want!

Fucking-A

Jeff and Mike got out The parking lot was deserted The market was deserted except for the cashier The traffic on the Interstate was a distant whisper

In and out and on the road again,' Jeff said heading for the big glass double doors Mike behind him.

Inside ihey found the usual junk food and soda, along with an assortment of everything from rock T-shirts io crab medicine They grabbed bags of chips, cookies snack cakes and sixpacks of soda, deciding against brew for the road

Just a risk we don't need ' Jeff said

'Shouidn'i drink and drive,' Mike added They laughed

The cashier smiled as he rang up iheir purchases Going far?' he asked

Jeff nodded, 'Came a long way, and got a long way to go yet.'

I used to love road trippin,' the cashier said. Driving just gives me a bitch of a headache these days

Yeah,' Mike said

'You got a bathroom?' Jeff asked.

In back around the corner ' The cashie pointed to the rear of the store

Thanks Jeff said Gotta lighten the load before we hit the road, you know

I hear you the clerk said, still smiling.

'I thunk that guy s a faggot, man ' Mike said after he and Jeff had found the men s room and closed and locked the door bahind them

Naw, Jeff said doing a hii from ihe glass vial he kept tn his front pocket 'You think everybody s a faggoi He hended the vial to Mike, sniffing deeply This uncui shii was so smooth, ii never burned or made you sneeze

He was staring at your crotch the whole time we were standing there Mike said, inhaling the remainder of the contents of the vial

You re just jealous Jeff said

Yeah, right, Mike said Anyway I don't thinb everybody s a faggot I just know you are '

Fuck you and the horse you rode in on, Jeff replied Let's roll My feet are itchin'

They checked out each other s noses for telltale traces of white as they left the washroom The cashier looked up from the paperback novel he was reading and gave them a wave Maybe see ya again sometime he said,

Never can tell, can ya? Mike said snickering They'd left the junk food cache on the counter while they were in the car, Jeff grabbed the bags and Mike goi the door for him.

The silence was like a slap It was only when they walked out and let the market door slam shut behind them thet Jeff realised the cashier had been listening to a radio.

Jesus, he said Let a hit ii I want to hear some jam.

'Seriously, Mike said You re driving on the interstate, he intoned imitating Rod Serling you think the exit ramp leads to a place to eat but in fact you just exited into *The Twilight Z—*'

They both stopped short when they saw the car Mike shut his mouth wiih a snap Jeff moved a couple of steps closer The bags dropped to the pavement.

'Son of a bitch Jeff said quietly

The hood of the car was covered in graffiti Slogans had been cui through the paint with a very sharp object and were scored deep into the metal underneath Crude pictures had been drawn

As Jeff read the slogans, something cold and slimy seemed to inch its way up his back, finally lodging in his throat

*Brotherhood of Hell — Lenny Dee Jasper 88* one of the slogans read *Darkness From the Depths* said another *He rules both Pit and Earth above Kingdom of Sin. King of Chaos. Pain is his Pudding*

'Jeff look, Mike said urgently pointing across the parking lot A kid about their own age late teens or early twenties had materialised out of the tall grass beside the outbuilding that housed the gas pumps. The kid had long, dirty brown hair He wore a brown leather hat and a jean jacket. He had a piece of hay sticking out of the corner of his smiiing mouth The amile was made sinister by many missing teeth.

In his left hand was a knife with a long curved blade and a serrated edge

Jeff walked around the car toward the kid 'Did you do this shit to my car, you little fuck?' he snarled red color rising into his face

Jeff what are you doing, man? Mike hissed. 'We don t need any trouble Let s just blow, man. We don t need no cops showing up

'Fuck that Jeff said, clenching his fists Little bastard wrote that evil shit on my car He cut that shit into my car!'

Just let it go ' Mike said. Come on...

'Go around to the trunk,' Jeff said 'There s a tire iron in there

'No, man Mike pleaded 'How long were we in there? Five minutes tops? You think he did all that damage by himself in five minutes? Let's just blow, we don t need any shit coming down on us.

Jeff glared at him Get it, he said

The boy stood at the edge of the parking lot still smiling

You d better start running, man Jeff yelled 'You re gonna need a good head start I'm not kidding.'

The boy didn't move

Your ass is mine 'spat Jeff, and then a loud roaring and screeching was in his ears, coming from behind He knew what it was before he spinned round A huge white station wagon roared into the parking lot, leaving black streaks on the pavement and a haze of white oilsmoke in the air It swerved left, heading straight for the back of Jeff s car, straight for Mike

Heads up man! Jeff screamed Mike looked up as he shut the trunk, the tire iron in his hand

Huh? he said and blinked

The white station wagon slammed into Mike, and an instant later into the back of Jeff s car Metal popped glass jingled Jeff heard Mike s ribcage splinter He saw blood spray from his mouth and nose As the two cars met he saw the skin along the side of Mike s midsection split He ripped open like a doll with a badly stitched seam and slid to his knees, arms crossed gripping himself, his mouth open and ululating blood Mike coughed once, made a gurgling sound He sagged, arms loosening, and then his ruined ribcage parted and his abdomen opened and Mike came apart on the pavement. His shattered body twitched Droplets of blood danced upward and pattered onto the pavement.

Jeff opened his mouth to scream and suddenly found himself doubled over hands cupped over his crotch The long-haired boy stood over him Gonna kick you again ' he said conversationally and backed off a little He wore boots with pointed toes, and the toe caught Jeff on the underside of the chin He went down sprawled full-length His mind went blank His vision was hazy A roaring sound filled his ears, and it took him a second to realise that it was the station wagon again He heard the rattle and pop of gravel under its tires as it reversed across the parking lot He heard the hum of the engine, and he felt the vibration of it through the contact of his head with the pavement It was turning toward him He had to move But he couldn t Pain imprisoned him.

The long-haired boy stepped back as the big car rolled forward, forward Jeff smelled heat, rubber He closed his eyes He could feel it right next to him The engine idled

The gearshift engaged The car rolled backward Jeff tried to move again, no good He opened his eyes His vision had cleared

He looked up just in time to see the station wagon roll forward again The sun glinted on the grillwork, making the car seem to grin It loomed over him huge and blocky, and the right front tire rolled over his right hand The car stopped trapping his pinky and ring fingers under the wheel

Jeff howled The long haired boy laughed in answer

The engine died The driver's and passenger's side doors opened and two more sets of boots with pointed toes hit the pavement Jeff looked up into two pairs of cold dark eyes, two vacant smiles These two had long hair as well, and were dressed like the boy with the knife One was similarly armed, the other held a meat cleaver.

Go take care of the other one' the boy with the knife said The boy with the cleaver smiled, and moved off while the other crouched down beside Jeff

C mere Lenny' he said. The boy who had kicked Jeff came over

How's your nuts, guy?' Lenny said The two boys laughed

'Lenny did a job on you man '

Hey, Doc,' Lenny said quietly, can I have his eyes man? it's my turn

Doc chuckled 'You ll have to share with your brother One for you, one for him.

I want em both, Lenny sulked 'Jasper got 'em last time It s my turn '

Share and share alike, Doc said.

It's my turn Lenny said sullenly

*Brotherhood of Hell — Lenny Doc Jasper 88* Jeff remembered *He rules both Pit and Earth above... Pain is his Pudding*

His hand was burning agony He fought to think. Doc and Lenny are here keeping an eye on me What's Jasper doing?

He heard it then — a series of wet chopping sounds He closed his eyes weeping hopelessly

'Tough day huh guy? Doc said Everybody needs a friend on days like this — right, Lenny?'

Right Lenny answered up

Bring this guy his friend Jasper, Doc said.

Thumping bootsteps moved across the pavement Jeff kept his eyes closed Jasper's shadow fell across his face Jeff felt a soft weight fall onto his chest

With friends like these, Doc said, 'who needs enemies? Right, guy?'

Jeff didn t want to open his eyes They opened anyway

Mike's hand sat propped up on Jeff s chest

DAVID L. DUGGINS is an American in the US Forces stationed in High Wycombe. He has had several stories published in American small press magazines this is his first professional sale. He is currently looking for an agent for his first novel and is working on a second

**"He rules both Pit and Earth above. Kingdom of Sin. King of Chaos. Pain is his Pudding"**

the dead eyes staring through him, beyond him. They had stuffed something into his mouth Jeff couldn t tell what it was, but he could see that it was part of Mike

Good friends stick together through thick and thin, Doc commented

That was certainly true Jeff s mind floated back to a time when he and Mike were kids. They were playing on the big kids swingsets Municipal Park They weren t supposed to use the big swingsets, Mom had told them that a million times If she'd told them once, but they had to see what the big swings were like Jeff had fallen off in the middle of a forward swing and landed on his head He woke up in a hospital and his Mom told him that Mike had come running up to a policeman and reported what had happened and the policeman had called an ambulance. The policeman said Mike had been very calm and brave

Mike is certainly calm now Jeff thought

Wake up, sleepyhead Lenny said kicking Jeff in the side of the head

'Have a little courtesy, Doc said Let s try to make his last moments comfortable shall we?' He leaned over his nose almost touching Jeff's. 'Do you know anything about sacrifice, man?' he asked His breath reeked 'I wonder if anybody these days really knows anything about sacrifice People these days aren t willing to make sacrifices you know? If things don t go their way they just... bug out... sell out... take the easiest path and they don t care who they fuck over on the way out You get what I m saying?'

Jeff didn t answer The pain was a claxon in his nerve endings Doc eased himself into a sitting position and continued

It s a tough old world Doc said but there are ways to get by You can get what you want. There are ways He paused But it can t be done without sacrifice

Lenny and Jasper stood at the edge of Jeff s vision eyes gleaming

Sacrifice for friends Doc said 'Sacrifice for loved ones

Lenny and Jasper moved closer

Sacrifice to your god

Jeff tensed but Doc wasn t finished yet The pain was a deep throbbing, living in his mind. Pain was not a thing of the flesh, it was a thing of the mind He worked on driving it out

Do you believe in God, man? Doc asked I do Man, you d be crazy not to, all the wild shit that happens in the world Yeah, I believe in God I believe he s a cruel, childish son of a bitch

Lenny and Jasper laughed.

He s fine for heaven Doc said He s fine for up there for that great kingdom in the sky you know what I m saying? He s a king in his kingdom up there *But what is he down here, man? What is he?*

Doc cracked his knuckles flipped the knife into the air deftly caught it with one hand He ain't nothing down here man. You pray to him from way down here and maybe he can hear you but He can t reach you from way up there Maybe he could a long time ago in the Old Testament days, but not any more He s moving away from us We don t mean so much any more He sees us down here in all our pettiness and foolishness and he says, Fuck this, I'm out of here these cats are undeserving

Doc stood and lifted his head He will receive us unto Heaven! Doc shouted *But what the fuck am I supposed to do while I m down here?*

Lenny and Jasper watched hypnotised Jeff watched too but his mind was occupied He was chasing the pain away He could feel it disappearing

Doc knelt down again 'So I looked for an alternative and he damned if there isn t one!' He tilted his head, considering Actually I'll most likely be damned *because* there is one All three of them laughed this time

Jeff looked up at the sky The colors were moving, deepening with the approach of dusk.

The pain was gone He was weak, but the pain was gone

Lenny reached down and rolled Mike s head off Jeff s chest Jasper scooted it clear with his foot, and then kicked it across the parking lot

You understand I hold nothing against you,' Doc said apologetically. 'But sacrifices must be made That's the way it's got to be It s what my god demands. He raised the knife above Jeff's chest

'It s too bad about your friend there' Doc said 'He would have been good, but he was already dead when we got to him.

Jeff locked his eyes on the blade of the knife

He would have been good But, see, we've got to have your guts out of you while you're still alive My god demands it

Jeff s vision clouded around the shape of the blade He breathed evenly, deeply He saw nothing but the blade

It s good to learn sacrifice, don t you agree?' Doc said to Lenny and Jasper They nodded, staring at Jeff, their faces wet soft.

Doc grinned This will only hurt for a second, he said and he brought the knife down

Jeff watched the blade descend He did not blink He saw it fall from the top of its arc all the way down to a line he had mentally drawn in space about a half inch above his chest When the tip of the blade crossed that line Jeff moved He twisted sideways His trapped fingers ripped free with twin popping sounds Jeff heard the sound of metal against concrete as the blade struck the ground where he had been He continued to roll He rolled into Lenny and Jasper s feet and knocked them both down Knife and cleaver flew He came up, saw the cleaver, and grabbed it

Jeff s grip on the cleaver was strange, awkward He realised he had left his pinky and ring fingers underneath the wheel of the white station wagon

No! Doc wailed knife held high again Lenny and Jasper were struggling to their feet

**"He ripped open like a doll with a badly stitched seam and slid to his knees"**

Jeff sidestepped over to where the knife lay and kicked it into the grass out of reach

You re not supposed to move Doc moaned "You re supposed to lie there be afraid accept the sacrifice *My god needs you to be afraid! He needs e sacrifice!*"

Meybe he a not too particular about where his dinner comes from,' Jeff said, and he leapt in He dodged around a clumsy thrust from Doc brought the cleaver up and slammed it into Doc s face Doc fell backward into the white station wagon Jeff had hit him hard enough to shide the top corner of the cleaver a blade bloodiesaly through the back of his head the passenger a side window shattered as ha fell against it

Doc slid down the front of the car The corner of the meet cleaver left a long scretch in the paint

Lenny and Jasper looked at Doc, then looked at each other, and ran They loped across the parking lot with broken, irregular strides Jeff could tell by watching them that they were not used to running.

He could catch up easily

Smiling, Jeff strolled to his car The front had been slightly damaged in its collision with the side of the market but it didn t seem too bad perhaps the car would start. If it doesn t I'll just teke the station wagon Jeff thought Run them down in their own car

The beck of the car was much more badly damaged than the front The rear window had been broken out the fander mengled lights smashed.

Blood was splashed outside and inside clear up to the front seat, and there were pieces of Mike scattered all around the car Jeff stepped over them and got in, inserting the key into the ignition. He turned once, tamping the gas pedal The car sterted immediately He backed it up ignoring tha alight thump-and-rettle of whatever he was backing over and swung out of the market s parking lot As he turned the wheel he saw his right hand for the first time The ring and pinky fingars ware strange glistening knobs black with coagulated blood The fingers had simply come free of the sockets The bleeding had stopped There was no pain, and there would be none Meybe later, when I get to New York, he thought No time for it now

He saw them running along the side of a little two-lene country road that lay paralet to the Interstate Right beside the road Jeff thought as he turned onto it idiots If you'd cut across a field or something you might have had a chance

Jeff cut the distance between himself end the two boys in half, and then in half again, and he saw them turn and try to run into the field next to the road There wes a high board fence there Neither of them could manage to scremble over it

*My God demands a sacrifice* Doc a words rang in Jeff s eara

Lenny and Jasper were dark shapes against the darker plane of the fenca Jeff kicked on the headlights Only one of them worked He thought of Mike, always wanting to know what time it was, not knowing how little he actually had left He thought of the deal that lay ahead, in New York He thought again of Doc.

*My God demands a sacrifice*

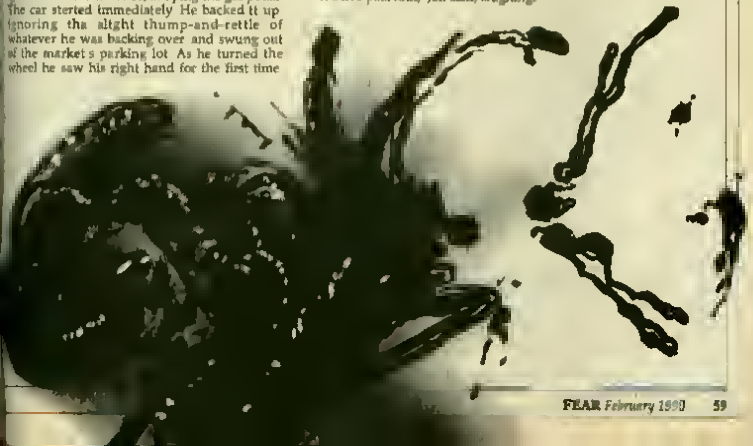
*My* God helps those who helps themselves' Jeff said aloud He laughed as he gunned the car forward beckward, forward egem The wheel lurched and spun in his hand Backweed, forward egain His hands changed places in the range of his vision His wetch was on he left wrist and he ceught a glimpse of it out of the corner of his eye

Mike always wanting to know what time it was

Backward, forward again.

It's five past four, Jeff said, laughing.

**"Do you know anything about sacrifice, man?"'**



# AT THE BOTTOM OF THE GARDEN

**"There was something odd about him, something that wasn't right..."**

**BY LUCY SPEAR**

Do you like gardening, Constable? I was never much of a gardener myself. That was my husband Peter's obsession, the garden. After he died, I tried to keep it looking tidy but I had no enthusiasm for it. I pruned the roses and mowed the lawn now and again, and I used to wander up and down the little paths sometimes, thinking about Peter, and occasionally weeding around the flowers that struggled through.

But a large part of the garden was neglected and became rather overgrown. Peter's vegetable patch disappeared under a mass of weeds as soon as the warmer weather came. The tops of the fruit bushes stuck out like islands above a sea of green. As the summer came, and the blackcurrants and raspberries ripened, the birds feasted on the fruit, and I left it for them.

There came a day in August, hot and cloudless, when I decided to shake myself out of my lethargy. It was not too late for a little spring-cleaning, I thought, and I took down the kitchen curtains and washed them. As I was pegging them on the line at the end of the garden, I noticed that the gooseberries were ripe. Now I have always loved gooseberries, and Peter grew one particularly delicious sweet variety, with a smooth reddish skin that would burst in your mouth and release the cool tartness of its juice.

It seemed silly to leave them for the birds, so I fetched a bowl from the kitchen and returned to the bottom of the garden.

I pushed through the weeds and crouched down to pick the berries. The sunshine flooded down on me, and the warm green smell of the garden surrounded me, and I felt happy for the first time in months.

The bowl was half full, and I was about to start on the third bush when I heard a noise, not a chuckle, not a squeak, but something between the two. It came from somewhere in the dense greenery at the base of the bush. I was curious to see what animal had made that noise, and I gently parted the weeds.

There, under the gooseberry bush, hidden by ground elder and chickweed, was a baby.

I picked him up and held him in my arms, and he looked at me and smiled.

He was tiny, as small as a newborn baby, but his face wasn't newborn. He smiled at me with recognition and understanding, and his eyes... well, I've never seen a baby with eyes like that, nor any adult come to that. They were a sort of golden colour, and you couldn't see any white at all. And the pupils weren't round. They were like a slit of black across each eye.

I knelt there cuddling him, and wondering what to do.

My first thought was to take him to the nearest hospital. He was quite naked, and I thought I should wrap him up in something, despite the heat of the day. There was something odd about him, something that wasn't right, apart from those disturbing eyes. I couldn't think what it was at first, but as I stood up to take him indoors, I suddenly realised what it was, and I nearly dropped him then.

You see, he had no navel.

There were other things about him that were different too I noticed afterwards once I had decided to keep him The tiny nails on his fingers and toes were pointed like little claws and under his shiny brown curls his ears were pointed too But it was the fact that he had no navel that made me decide not to take him to a hospital not to tell anyone at all but to keep him myself I knew that he wasn t human I knew that if I gave him up he would become a scientific curiosity something to be observed and discussed perhaps even experimented upon I couldn t bear to think of him never having a proper home never having somebody to love him and I felt sorry for him

So I kept him and said nothing

Because I knew he wasn t human, I didn t worry when he acted differently from human babies. He wouldn t drink milk, and I wondered what to feed him on at first until I saw the way he looked at the bowl of gooseberries I mashed some up and fed them to him on a spoon and he loved that He ate nothing but gooseberries for nearly a fortnight, and he was thriving He grew plump and strong and was sitting up by himself and beginning to crawl by the time the gooseberries in the garden were nearly all finished

I always left him at home while I went out for my little bits of shopping down the road I made sure I was never out for long, but now that he was so active I worried about him hurting himself while I was out.

I hurried to the shops and back, and as I opened the front door I could hear him crying in the kitchen. I found him sitting beside the open fridge a lump of cheese on the floor beside him He had bitten into it and spat the mouthful out again he was clearly both hungry and frustrated

As he opened his mouth to wail again, I could see that several little teeth had come through They were very white and they were pointed

I picked him up and soothed him Still holding him in one arm I began to unpack my shopping basket I put apples and carrots on the table and then I reached into the basket and pulled out the plastic bag containing the lamb chop I had bought for my dinner He reached again and snatched it from my hand Before I could do anything he was tearing at the plastic with his hands and teeth, and had begun to chew the raw, damp meat with evident enjoyment I sat him down on the floor and watched with some alarm as he ate the whole chop worrying and chewing at the bone in the end, and contentedly licking the blood from his tiny hands to finish with

From that day on he would only eat raw meat At first I bought him more lamb chops and a piece of steak now and then But as the days went on and he began to toddle around, his appetite grew and I had to buy him a leg of lamb or a beef joint every day The butcher must have thought I was crazy buying so much meat but I didn t dare tell him about my boy

I began to worry about what I could do if his appetite grew any bigger I was eating little enough myself as it was, as it cost so much to feed him now

Then one day I came home with some nice liver for him, and found him sitting on the floor surrounded by feathers. His mouth and hands were smeared with blood and those unhuman eyes were glazed with satisfaction The back door was open. I hadn t realised he was able to unlock it and go in and out as he chose He had somehow managed to catch a bird a blackbird I think It must have been He had eaten everything except the feathers and part of the head

The next morning, when I went downstairs into the kitchen I found the remains of a cat My boy had eaten all the flesh and left a ragged skin the ginger and white fur all matted with blood There were one or two clean white bones lying there but he must have eaten the rest. He lay curled up under the kitchen table with his chubby hands under his cheek, looking like a sleeping cherub apart from the brown smears of dried blood on his face and hands

After that I locked him in his bedroom at night This morning, I went to let him out and found his room was empty The window was open I hadn t thought he could climb or jump from there, but he must have done

He didn t come home until this evening I had left the back door open hoping He toddled wearily over the doorstep and stood swaying slightly in the middle of the kitchen blinking and smiling at me He was radiantly happy, and he was covered with blood

In one hand he held the end of a big stick which trailed on the floor behind him Then I saw that it wasn t a stick at all, but a child s arm, gnawed off at the shoulder and partly eaten

He s at home now He s asleep under the kitchen table still clutching that arm I ve locked the doors, but if he wakes up he knows how to get out If you come quickly, Constable, you should be able to catch him while he s still asleep

I m going to clear the weeds tomorrow Then I'm going to dig up all the gooseberry bushes and burn them.

LUCY SPEAR lives near Falmouth in Cornwall She has written several horror and science fiction short stories and is at present planning a full length horror novel.

**"He was radiantly happy, and he was covered in blood"**

# GETTING WHAT YOU WANT

By W Paul Blakey

From the moment I saw her I knew my life had changed She was sleek, smooth and curved in all the right places The only problem was the fact that some other guy had his hands all over her And that 'some-other-guy' was Fergus, boil-burn' Fergus arch-rival creep Fergus from college days gone past I swallowed my gall and strode across the street towards him

Fergus, I called out as heartily as I could, where have you been all these years?' It struck me that he didn t seem to have aged as much as I had in fact he looked just like I remembered him

He looked puzzled for a moment though I m sure he recognised me instantly and was just playing me along

Karl Is it Karl ?'

'Constant I added before he could finish the charade

Yes, of course, Karl Constant from Cambridge

He remembered all right you could see the synapses firing behind his eyes as he calculated the possibilities of something happening to his

**"And you always said I was so uncreative,' he said, and all the time he kept caressing and stroking her, knowing it was driving me insane"**

advantage

But I didn't care, I was interested in what was behind him He noticed my look and swept a long, lingering wipe across the smooth purity of her frame

With obvious pride he said, 'Do you like her? She s the latest model'

He was referring to his MT MT was short for Matter Transfer which was the invention that made instantaneous travel possible It was one of the gifts received by humanity since contact had been made with other worlds

For some unknown but highly technical reason, the machine refused to function unless it was beautifully designed and aerodynamically perfect even though air resistance was not a factor And it was because of this paradox that people started to refer to the machines as women Which in fact seemed to help them function better Real women complained that it was degrading, but the fact was, the machines really did work better if they were petted and polished and made a fuss of

She s beautiful I gushed She really was One of the Ferrari models, a clean sphere glowing with ethereal light and emitting a low, sensual purring hum.

Yes she is, he agreed And I'm sure that as he stepped closer and rubbed a bit harder with his polishing cloth the hum increased in pitch, like a moan of pleasure.

I swallowed the lump in my throat Fergus, how can you afford something like this?'

I don t suppose you take much note of the news, but if you did you would know that the lottery last month was won by someone who preferred to remain anonymous.'

You mean you 'I stammered

He smiled 'And you always said I was so uncreative he said and all the time he kept caressing and stroking her knowing it was driving me insane

Sweat had broken out on my forehead, I had to use my handkerchief to mop my face because salty drops were dripping from my eyebrows Fergus looked as cool as ever in his designer jacket I decided to drop all pretense and speak my mind

Is it true I asked, 'what everyone says about travelling in an MT?

He wasn t going to make it easy for me 'I don t know, what do people say?'

I plunged ahead You know, the rumour about how MT is better than sex Is it true?'

He laughed How would I know? You got all the girls when we were at school I never had the time Then he did something with his hands and an opening appeared in the side of the MT He climbed into the aperture and settled himself into the seat with an audible sigh The iris closed, there was a slight change in frequency then a *pop*, and he was gone

From that moment, my life began to go downhill.

It was as if I had been drugged or hypnotised I stood there for the longest time staring into space until a passer-by stopped to ask if I felt all right

'Yeah, fine, OK just day dreaming, I muttered unconvincingly but managed to get my feet moving in the direction of the park. I found an unoccupied bench and used my card to release the force field so I could sit down I felt too shaky to walk much further and I couldn t cope with the park wardens shooing me off the grass

All I could think of was how I could get an MT I d seen them before on the 3D but never close up never driven and owned by someone I knew And especially not by someone I had hoped to forget.

I was trembling and my heart was pounding I thought I could hear voices like at a party when you hear your own name spoken and it stands out above the general noise The voices in the noise of my mind were telling me to do something, not just sit there, not just roll over and play dead ..

The bench started bleeping I jumped up No more from me, you bloodsucker!' I yelled, startling a young couple passing by I was on my way To the MT dealer

The fact that I had been on my way to work seemed to have escaped my mind as I risked arrest by running across the grass to the tube entrance But I wasn t spotted apart from by a few horrified pedestrians who could only stand with their mouths open as I desecrated the greenery.

There was only one dealer in the city, naturally in the most exclusive part and it took me three security checks and four random body searches, plus who knows how many unauthorised hidden invasions of my privacy, before I arrived MTs were manufactured by an enormous multi-world conglomerate who held the monopoly on Earth The building that housed the MT dealer was a study in opulence With space in Earth at an absolute premium they actually had a flower garden larger than the park I had just visited With real flowers — that you could smell I think they were roses

I walked up to the gate and stood waiting. The gate said Good day, please insert your card and state your name and business.

I did as I was told and replied, Karl Constant, I am interested in purchasing an MT'

The gate remained closed My card was returned Your credit rating is inadequate, said the synthetic voice

I kicked the gate It made no difference except that it bruised my toe but it was better than seething inside for the rest of the day So my credit was so limited that I couldn t even get inside to discuss terms! I d show them, snooty bastards!

It took me about an hour to find out that there was no legal way for me to make enough money to buy an MT One bank manager gleefully informed me that it would take me 257 years, at my present salary, before I could buy one And that was if I didn't eat or live in my apartment

**"From that moment, my life began to go downhill"**

in the meantime

So I had no alternative but to go outside.

There were fewer body checks on the way out of the business sector, just the usual screens and card scans, so my journey was considerably faster. Emerging from the tube, I found my way to The Bar.

Inside it was dark and smoky; a throwback to the Seventies and Eighties, with a tobacco machine which kept the room hazy. The stench was overpowering. I ordered a drink. They had a real bartender: he actually mixed and poured drinks. Very unhygenic. I sipped my drink trying not to touch my lips to the glass.

An image kept replaying itself in my mind. It was Fergus stepping into his MT and vanishing — *pop!* — I'd never seen that in real life and I was obsessed with a desire to experience it for myself. Whatever the cost, I had to have one!

I leaned over the bar and whispered to the bartender: 'Do you know a man called Sting?'

He gestured with his head towards a dark shape in the corner.

As I approached the man said, 'Sit down Mr Constant.' I made to sit to one side. 'No, not there: here in front of me.' It was obvious why he wanted me to sit opposite, the light was arranged to keep him in shadow and to illuminate my face.

I must have looked surprised because he continued: 'You paid by card. Mr Constant. To me that means an instant baring of your plastic soul.'

He must have had a wrist viewer linked to the bar's bill. I decided not to waste time: 'I want an MT and I'll do anything to get one,' I said.

In all fairness, he tried to discourage me: he had his goons throw me out of the bar three times but I kept coming back and I think that impressed him. 'I wish now he had been more persistent.'

'OK,' he said, 'you're crazy enough. Come back tomorrow night and I might have something you can do for me.'

Suddenly I experienced a prick of conscience: 'You don't want me to kill someone...?'

He laughed: a deep oily unhealthy laugh that turned into a rasping cough. 'Murder isn't for amateurs. Besides, it don't pay enough — no risk!'

The following evening I returned to the bar. Mr Sting wasn't there but two other guys were sitting at his table and the bartender directed me to them. They were both wearing night-specs and I knew they could see me a lot better than I could see them. Before I could speak, they stood up and walked out of the bar. I followed.

I didn't like the feeling I was experiencing — but what could I do? I was committed. I followed them down the street until they turned left into a small opening between two buildings. There was no light at all and the darkness blinded me completely.

I felt hands grabbing me, pinning me against the wall. My pockets were emptied and I saw, for a second, the dim red light of a reader as they checked my credentials. One of them grunted and the other one released me.

A voice said, 'Listen close and don't ask questions. You won't like what we're gonna do but if you keep your mouth shut and put up with it, Mr Sting says you can have what you want.'

Before I could say anything, I felt a piercing blow to my throat, then a savage kick to my abdomen and more and more pain until mercifully I passed out.

When I regained consciousness I was in a bed. There was a strange beeping noise and when I tried to move my arm I noticed there was a tube connecting me to a bottle suspended above. The beeping noise was some sort of monitor: the beeps were synchronised with my heart beat and were very rapid. An alarm bell sounded. The door flew open and a nurse and a doctor hurried into the room.

It's funny how vulnerable you feel lying in a bed with people peering down at you. The doctor spoke: 'Well, Mr Constant, good to see you back with us. You had us a bit worried.'

I tried to speak but nothing came out. A blinding pain shot from my throat down into my chest.

'Don't try to talk, the cartilage in your throat has been torn and it will be a while before you can speak again. You're lucky to be alive: so relax and take it easy. You've also had abdominal surgery for the internal injuries — don't try to sit up.'

I nodded indicating that I understood — which seemed to please them. The nurse asked me if it was in pain. I nodded again. She moved to a machine, adjusted a dial and the pain subsided. I smiled.

Immobilisation of the body gives the brain a wonderful chance to exert itself and mine was no exception. Primarily I was thinking what an idiot I'd been: how stupid I was, what a fool and what a dope.

But I was also wondering why I'd been put in hospital and why I'd been rendered speechless in such a painful way? And I'd come to the conclusion that I'd been taught a very painful lesson. At this moment of discovery the nurse brought me a very strange message.

She came in looking very pleased. 'Mr Constant,' she said, plumping up the pillows, 'your brother was here today and he has arranged for you to go to a private nursing home.' 'Oh. I'm sorry, did I hurt you? I'll turn up the input.' She adjusted the dial on the machine. 'Is that better?'

I think I smiled. It was hard not to smile when she increased the current, the sensation was not just an absence of pain, it was an orgasmic pleasure. I now saw what wire-heads rave about. But deep down I was worried.

You see, I don't have a brother.

That evening I was moved by ambulance to a private hospital within the enclave. As they

**"The voices in the noise of my mind were telling me to do something, not just sit there, not just roll over and play dead"**

went through the security checks I heard the two drivers joking about the amount of credit they would need just to sleep on the street

Once installed in my private room, with my tubes and electrodes in place, I was left on my own to wait.

I didn'l have to wait long

The door opened, and in walked Mr Sting t say walked. but I should say waddled He was smiling, and he wasn t even connected to my machine

Mr Constant' he beamed, how nice to see you looking so well.'

I grimaced "Don t exert yourself, he continued 'I know you are unable to speak, so just relax and listen. He pulled up a chair that looked totally inadequate for his girth, and lowered himself into it with a sigh

You will be happy to know that your ordeal is nearly over There is just one small detail to attend to and that has been arranged for tomorrow morning He leaned closer I could smell his breath — it wasn't pleasant. 'You are scheduled for a minor operation

I tried to speak and sit up both at the same time The pain was excruciating, my entire body was bathed in a clammy sweat He made no move towards the machine I pleaded with my eyes' *Stop the pain, stop the pain!*

He ignored my silent plea "As I was saying, you are scheduled for an operation, he paused and reached for a tissue which he handed to me I mopped the perspiration from my forehead After that, all you have to do is get well, then you can go home and spend your money'

As he left he called to the nurse t heard him say I think our friend is in need of some stimulation Mercifully she rushed in and turned on the machine

That night was the worst I have ever spent I lay in the dark wondering what Sting had meant by a minor operation' I knew there was a thriving black market in replacement organs but, if that was the case why not just tell me? Why go through the elaborate scenario of having me beaten and transferred from one hospital to another?

Then I thought, maybe they are going to kill me or do some sort of medical experiment. It wasn t unknown for very rich people to use another person's body to keep themselves alive It was illegal, but when did the law ever have any control over the incredibly rich? Was this scheduled operation the preliminary blanking of my brain that would prepare me for connection to some old corporate chairman's rotting body? No it still didn't fit It they wanted me for that they wouldn t have damaged me they could have stunned me or drugged me instead

I didn t know what was happening or why it was going to happen and I was scared

At one point during the night a nurse came into the room and put something into the intravenous tube I tried to tell her no, but she ignored my thrashing head and a few seconds later I was unconscious

I woke up in the operating theatre There was a lot of noise and I could see two faces looking down at me, but they weren t doctors, they weren t wearing masks They were police officers

He s coming round now chief, shall I read him his rights? one of them said to the other

The chief lifted one of my eyelids and shone a small light into my eye I tried to blink Yeah, he s conscious enough to know what s going on

As he turned away I could see a doctor and two nurses spreadeagled against the tiled wall They were being searched What was going on? I heard the other man begin to read from a card You have the right to remain silent

The next few months were an escalation of horror I had been caught smuggling drugs worth billions of credits on the black market. The drugs were inside my abdominal organs, they had been implanted by the doctor in the first hospital and were in the process of being removed by the second doctor in the private hospital when the place was raided My protestations of innocence were ignored when the prosecution presented photographs of me sitting opposite Mr Sting in the bar, along with a recording in which I was saying 'I want an MT and I'll do anything to get one

I was sentenced to twenty five years penal servitude on one of the prison planets. Twenty-five years toiling in primitive conditions sweating and freezing so that one day immigrants might come and enjoy the fruits of my labour

And the ultimate irony of it all? Well, how do you think they transported me 3,000 light years away? And are the rumours true? Is travel by MT better than sex?

I m not telling — what will you do to find out?

**"I pleaded with my eyes: stop the pain, stop the pain!"**

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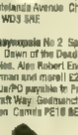

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# FEAR Reviews

## OFF THE SHELF

**Comic book collecting is all the rage, but where do you start? And how do you avoid being ripped off? We sent Graham Evans to scour the shelves and bring back some top titles.**

The graphic novel style should really be regarded as a medium in its own right. It stands alone not only from the caricature-based mainstream cartoon form but from film and literature as well. It is more immediate than prose and although it tells an image it does so without the inevitable photographic realism of filmed action.

Fantasy and horror feature prominently in the current wave. The medium is well suited to the amplification of disbelief in the fantastic and it comes as no surprise to learn that the likes of James Herbert, Clive Barker and Ramsey Campbell are beginning to work in the field.

What follows is a brief introduction to just a little of the confusing flood of brilliant good, mediocre and downright bad graphic novels, anthologies, multi series and regular monthlies available.

### A1

A quarterly perfect bound anthology (Atomeka Press £4.95) and a sort of successor to *Warrior*, it is a monthly British anthology comic of the early Eighties that struggled along for twenty six issues. Alan Moore had already worked in 2000 AD and the British division of Marvel Comics but *Warrior* was where he made his name and created V for Vendetta and recreated Miracleman. Two of his best series, *Warrior* was the reason DC Comics became interested in British talent. *A1* is edited by Dave Elliott and Garry Leach. Dez Skinn is assistant at *Warrior* and several of the creators used *A1* Volume 1 worked regularly on *Warrior*. Two of the better strips, Moore and Parkhouse's The Bojeffries Saga and Moore and Leach's Warpsmith are direct continuations from that magazine. *A1* fails to achieve its ambitions stated in the first editorial of reflecting the vast range of the contemporary comics scene, but it is definitely worth watching.

### DRACULA: A SYMPHONY IN MOONLIGHT AND NIGHTMARES

A one off graphic novel (Epic, Marvel £5.95) by Jon J Muth. Muth uses characters from Stoker's classic novel to create a symbolic, dreamlike and haunting meditation on love and sacrifice, sex and death. Economically and lyrically written, lavishly and impressionistically painted, the effect is poetic.

### HELLBLAZER

A monthly series from DC now being reprinted in black and white, graphic novel format by Titan £5.95 each, four issues a volume.

The adventures of John Constantine, an Alan Moore created character from the pages of *Swamp Thing*, intelligently written by Jamie Delano and drawn by Ron Tiner. The gritty, realistic art (his strip has features from the beginning makes it look better in black and white, but check out the recent *Hellblazer Annual 1*, a double-sized comic for £1.95 written by Delano and drawn by Bryan Talbot, the creator of Luther Arkwright, a character very similar in some ways to Constantine.

### LITTLE NEMO IN SLUMBERLAND

There are various reprint volumes around, currently being collected in four large volumes. Little Nemo in Slumberland is Winsor McKay's classic newspaper strip. Comics have been around for a long time. Nemo began in 1905 and is one of comics' first and greatest masterpieces. The Art Nouveau dream visions of a small boy called Nemo who roams through Slumberland in his dreams. Surreal, baroque, breathtaking and brilliantly coloured.

### MOEBIUS: THE INCAL, BLUEBERRY, VARIOUS ANTHOLOGIES

Jean Moebius Giraud is one of the most inventive artists in comics. It is impossible to describe his work fully, bizarre yet lucid in one phrase which springs to mind. *Lt Blueberry* will eventually consist of ten volumes, all reprints written by Jean-Michel Charlier. *The Incal* is a three volume mystery story scripted by Alexandro Jodorowsky (yes, that is the director of *Santa Sangre*) and there are six anthology volumes written by Moebius himself, some of which are interlinked.

### A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET

Marvel magazine size £1.45. Lasted just two issues. Written by Steve Gerber and drawn by Tony DeZuniga and Alfredo Alcala, three of the people associated with the Marvel horror wave of the Seventies. Reads as a pale imitation of that period, the art is competent enough but Gerber's scripting has lost most of its former subtle intelligence and has become lacklustre.

### THE SANDMAN

Monthly series from DC £1.00. The Sandman is an imaginary mythological figure, one of the Endless, the Master of Dreams, King Morpheus. The art is first by Sam Keith and Mike Dringenberg, now by Dringenberg and Keith Jones. Probably the best ongoing comic book series. The best issues to date are 3, in which the Sandman meets John Constantine, 4, in which he goes to Hell, and 8, an encounter with his big sister, Death. This comic boasts some magnificent covers by Dave McKean. Gaiman is a artist on *Violent Cases* (Titan £3.95), the one volume graphic short story with which Gaiman and McKean made their names, and *Black Orchid* (three volumes, DC £1.95 each).

### SWAMP THING

Monthly series from DC £1.00. Alan Moore's sojourn on the strip is collected in eleven black and white volumes from Titan £5.95 each, four issues a volume.

Made great by Moore's scripting and Stephen Bissette and John Totleben's art, this is the one that triggered the New Wave. After Moore left, Rick Veitch, who already taken over as artist – became scripter and the comic maintained its high standards, though it began to slip downhill just before his recent departure. Bissette and Totleben went on to publish the *Taboo* anthology. Bissette also contributed to *Gaughan* an interior version of *Taboo* put out by Fantaco and has two adaptations coming in 1990: *Night of the Living Dead* and the long awaited *Rat-head Red*. The best stories are in volumes 3, 4 and 5.

**Coming soon: Warren Lapworth, FEAR's own comic-book character, wades through sand and swamps and grabs the crisps and Coke before settling down to review graphic novels.**

# NIGHTMARE LINER

## THE HOPE

**James Lovegrove**
*Bladed* **Macmillan**
*Trade pb* **£12.99**
*Cased* **Harrow**

James Lovegrove's debut novel *Bladed* is a bizarre, usually comical series of short stories set—because of the eponymous ship—Five miles long, carrying a crew of 3,000 passengers and visiting more than a small country. If the ship can apply named ship Christ, day of its launch the philanthropist who paid for it commits suicide. This is on page one and thereafter it's all downhill.

The first of the short stories, *A Bladed Blood*, picks up the ship's story an indeterminate length of time after its first putting out to sea. The ship has deteriorated into a kind of floating Third World country, with paupers such as Mary Kitchener forced in [illegible] through the rubbish heap and

> [illegible] the ship has deteriorated. We don't know such a ship can be so completely lost on morality.

[illegible] sion for his [illegible] sive [illegible] and there is very little hope hint of anything much, although closing off the outside world is starest in it.

The ship is on the whole merely a fascinating setting for the short stories. The less-good ones, and the conclusion of the [illegible] provides a compelling frame for reading the book, although some of the short stories are outstanding individually. On the dark side, Lovegrove tends to utilise a very colloquial narrative voice which too often limits the prose to a rather mundane style. Mercifully, comic and scatological references to both dialogue and descriptions too often in my opinion, works against the fantastical nature of the Hope's voyage. In a more realistic setting, they might have passed unnoticed, but here they are rather jarring.

The subject matter of the stories is uniformly bleak. From an entire family painfully pressured to a girl dicing off her fingers and then feeding them to her boyfriend, Lovegrove seems to be trying for a fifth ambitious fantasy horror story, while never flinching from detailing gore in the clearest way possible. While minutely flawed, *The Hope* is an interesting and unusual debut. Devoid of a single ray of hope it is well worth checking out for a complete dark of comic sense.

**Stuart Wynne**

## HIGHWAY OF ETERNITY

Clifford D Simak is one of my favourite writers, a man who has proved he is able to tell a seemingly simple gilt-edged story which usually contains a wicked sting in the tail. *Highway of Eternity* (Mondarin paperback £2.99) is true to this tale.

It is the tale of a man who has lived in this world, have strange abilities. Tom Boone, a journalist by trade, is able to walk round corners in times of danger, so that he vanishes from sight. Although he doesn't know how, Jay Cee, an ex-CIA agent, was both injured when his plane crashed after a successful spying mission. He barely survived, but an emergency operation saved his life and he now possesses the ability to see things that ordinary people can't.

The story starts with Cameron calling, [illegible] a special talent to solve an injury. For many years a man calling himself Andrew Martin has paid Cameron to [illegible] Martin has provided the information and been handsomely rewarded, but the day Martin disappeared [illegible] Cameron [illegible] Martin [illegible] Mt Everest. This is the start of a huge look, the situation [illegible] to the side of the hotel [illegible] Martin a room, so he asks Boone to use his talent to get them into the box and discover just what is inside.

This sets them on an adventure through both space and time. Along the way they meet up with a world of a creature they call The Hat, many aliens and robots, eventually they discover an invasion, all the questions that Simak skillfully poses in the text and the ending surprises [illegible] with a tale [illegible] ending.

**Mark Caswell**

## DRAGONLANCE PRELUDES 2 KENDERMORE

The Dragonlance saga runs [illegible] like an ageing ship in water. Borne on a simple stream rather than a raging river, the second volume, *Kendermore* (Penguin paperback £3.99), written by Mary Kirchoff and Stephen Tassedell, finds [illegible] of the main protagonists characters in the Dragonlance Chronicles. This time, though, Kirchoff sets her story five years before those Chronicles began.

Tassis, as usual, not happy, smashing. Usually adept at escape, after he fails to [illegible] bounty hunter, Kendermore, and take him back to Kendar for a shotgun wedding. His problems multiply as his bride [illegible] disappears, his pet [illegible] wizard's menagerie disappears, [illegible] that [illegible] the [illegible] creature in such books, he must save his homeland.

As Michael Palin has pointed out in *Monty Python*, it's all pretty mundane stuff, sadly, but Tassis is an interesting character and there are several dull moments in his adventures. For that reason, *Kendermore* is an improvement on the first volume of this series, although I suspect that this series will be judged on its individual parts and not on current performance. I do not [illegible] high [illegible].

**John Gilbert**

## MICROCOSM

Himmel Ian Lynch's *Tales From the Microcosm* (Gazelle Book Services paperback £2.50) is one of those adventure books which claims to be aimed to both children and adults. For adults, at least, this always something to be wary of.

The plot here concerns a the

days, among young girl Christ Spher, and the lady [illegible] accepted the same age as his mother. One is naive and aging the other is serious and all knowing, and there isn't much more to them than this. Christopher meets the lady at a telephone exchange which is improbably and secretly used by her as a physics laboratory. She's developed the RASREM [illegible] Revolutionary Anti matter Resonant Module. This not as [illegible] might expect, a dramatic way of disappearing a nuisance, but a machine that shrinks people.

Christopher is promptly taken on the first run of this prototype and is soon observing Ellis Electron and Pat Proton. This is obviously the point of the exercise and at the back of this book there is a two page list of the nuclear physics described in the fiction, with provisions ranging from [illegible] relativity of speed and distant dimensions. It also lynch's credit that all these details are fairly well hidden in an uncomplicated plot concerning an anti-matter monster which aims to destroy the world.

The anthropomorphisation of the various atomic particles giving them human characteristics is an unoriginal idea which initially disappoints (isn't really exciting enough?) but becomes more intriguing as Lynch struggles to explain how Ellis Electron – who was happily living with Pat Proton – can so happily switch to being with another two protons!

A slender 64 pages with an even slightly plot and a few okay story illustrations, there are disguising the fact *Microcosm* is a well intended introduction to physics dressed up as SF. If physics is a difficult subject and personal anything it could ease the pain later and even spark an interest in the dreaded subject. In short, a good present for a young scientist.

**Stuart Wynne**

## METROPOLIS

The musical may have folded, but for those interested in Fritz Lang's movie *Metropolis*, Faber paperbacks have released the apparently unappropriated version of the shooting script for the most reasonable price of £4.99.

Faber apparently unexpurgated because the original shooting script was not available and this version was compiled after re-viewing the film. A frontispiece originally written by Paul M Jensen for *The Cinema of Fritz Lang* describes how the film was put together and diverses its dark vision of the future.

The book is accompanied with stage directions that the reader benefit and illustrated with stills to give some impression of the mood of this movie. It has obviously impressed contemporary directors such as

[illegible] and Gary Kurtz here are they willingly acknowledge that they were influenced by Lang's work.

[illegible] the script should sit well on any film fan's bookshelf. It is thought-provoking. It shows that fantasy is not simply a province of contemporary filmmakers and that directors were using pretty heavy SF concepts way back in 1927.

**Mark Westerby**

## THE INTERGALACTIC JOKE BOOK

A pseudonymous book by Ann Droid (Knight Books, paperback £1.99) and judging by the [illegible] one of these jokes [illegible]

The compendium is divided into alphabetical sections starting with Androids, Asteroids, Astronauts, Aliens and Atomic Scientists, slipping through Quasar Quipe and landing in lunatic mood with Intergalactic Zoos and Zombies. While it is not my habit to pick one from books it would be unfair of me not to illustrate the levels of levity contained within the joke book's claustrophobically packaged confines.

Q. Where does the Martian with the laser gun sleep?

A. Anywhere he wants to.

Q. Water, water, there's a strange film in my soup.

A. What do you expect for 40p *Star Wars*?

Not bad for two quid, though I suggest you tell the shop keeper it's for your kid's Christmas stocking. There's still time.

**John Gilbert**

## RUN TO THE STARS

Set in the 16th century, Mike Shiel's new novel (Futura paperback £3.50) may miss out on one thousand years of technological innovation beloved by most other SF writers, but his socio-economic scenario seems familiar in the late twentieth century.

In [illegible] Shiel's the

# STAGE FRIGHT

## LAST ACT

**Christopher Pike**
*Publisher* **Lightning**
*Format* **PB, £2.50**
*Category* **Mystery/thriller**

Christopher Pike is a prolific writer of thrillers aimed primarily at the youth market but as is often the case with such fiction, enjoyed by many adults.

Hodder and Stoughton's Lightning imprint hoped that he would have a great success in the UK as in the US when they introduced his first two titles, *Chain Letter* and *Spellbound*, earlier this year, and to some extent he has fulfilled their enthusiasm.

[illegible] writes a mean mystery. In this one about about Melanie a new girl in town who auditions for the school play and rather unfortunately lands the starring role. Unfortunately, one of the previous girls – turns out to be more sick than intended and the young heroine becomes involved in a [illegible] death.

Last Act is part whodunit, part thriller and, as with all Pike's fiction, it also involves a clear moral, giving it the main [illegible] appeal of the more [illegible] fiction, [illegible] the [illegible]

[illegible] a note [illegible] with [illegible] Pike's [illegible] Both [illegible] have [illegible] the [illegible] thousand [illegible] target audience [illegible] talent writer who [illegible] adults, and [illegible] plots sparkle with [illegible] characters peopled by believable characters. His reputation [illegible] grow in the UK and there is no doubt in my mind that in the not so distant future he will register on the [illegible] bestseller lists.

**Mark Westerby**


The final volume in the Pandora Trilogy begun in

*The Lazarus Effect*

and

*The Jesus Incident*

On Pandora, where water is the ecological equivalent to *Dune*'s desert, the fight to reclaim land – and grow food – is on

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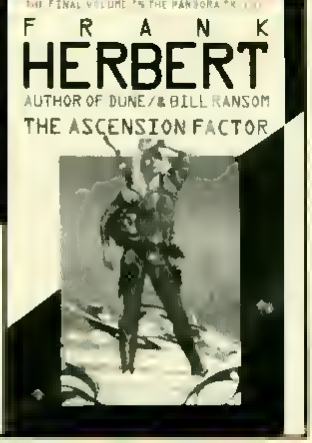



Orbit

government is highly hierarchical and officials within its web are all too willing to destroy any of their friends who makes in order to get promotion. Security Chief Mark Sullivan is just one innocent framed by his sanctimonious superiors for a particularly vicious murder.

As the State tries to track him down he decides to escape in the most dramatic way possible with thirty thousand passengers aboard a space ship bound for the stars. It is twenty-two year journey has only one purpose to find out what is Out There.

A new world and to populate it. The book describes half any a odyssey from a bitter, corrupt dying world to the dangerous but hopeful life in another planet.

Space voyage books are two a penny in SF, but Kahan's description of how people can be changed by circumstance and how, when you leave an established pattern of behaviour absolute goods or evils vanish made this more than a run of the mill SF novelette with rounding adventure thrown in for good measure.

**Mark Westerby**

## THE PALADIN

C J Cherryh's new novel *The Paladin* (Mandarin paperback, £3.99) shows just how flexible fantasy can be. Set in a world of Samurai justice it parallels the rise of a princess of Tarn, a young girl who pretends poverty in win a scholarship with Shoka, a humble swordmaster, of whom she quickly grows fond.

The elegant life is self imposed but the story behind it leaves this wanting revenge in the court of Chiyaden, ruled over by the limitless Lord Ghita. Once trained in the arts of sharp steel Tarn learns to employ Ghita and re-unite the rightful heir to Chiyaden's throne. But Shoka is tired of the dangers of court intrigue and Tarn has to work hard to impress him to join her mission of vengeance.

*The Paladin* – which incidentally means a champion knight – is set in a world that in concept is sixteenth century Japan but in reality and very little written imagination. Certainly the honour codes appear to be the same, but deep in real names the world in which Tarn lights for justice might be situated anywhere, even on another planet. For that reason the story rather than the setting is the core of the novel.

Cherryh ignores irrelevant description in favour of a fast flowing narrative. As a result the book does not come across as James Clavell's Shogun dramatised, in which I am extremely grateful. It also shows that high fantasy can be moulded from situations other than those of medieval England. It's fresh and inviting. Something to please readers.

**John Gilbert**

## THE EARTH LORDS

Gordon R Dickson is best known for his Dorsai series, but his latest book *The Earth Lords* (Sphere paperback, £3.50) appears to be a one-off and set on our home planet to boot.

Not that you'd recognise good old Earth with what Dickson has done to it. The main thrust of the story takes place in a labyrinthine city built by aliens under the Canadian wilderness – sounds familiar? Here, the Earth Lords keep humans as slaves, often using them as elementary transport. One such steed is Bart Dybig, a man who invokes unintentionally for his masters but secretly dreams of escaping in what remains of the outside world.

His dreams become more insistent as he learns that the Earth Lords are building a weapon designed to destroy any remaining pockets of human life on the planet's surface. Using his unusual psychic and physiological powers, he intends to escape and stop the diminution in their tracks.

*The Earth Lords* – like so much of Dickson's other work – does not make great literature but it does provide easy, undisturbed and above all unpretentious entertainment for his constant living band of fans.

**Mark Westerby**

## GOTHAM BY GASLIGHT

Imagine the sprawling city of Gotham one hundred years ago yet already defended by the ever-popular night creature the Batman. The alternative history presented in *Gotham By Gaslight* (Titan, hardback, £2.50) begins with millionaire and part-time vigilante Bruce Wayne returning to his Gotham mansion after five years in England.

As the Batman, Bruce soon sets about cleaning up the ever-growing criminal elements and his caped crusade begins. The bad news. However, he must share the headlines with the most famous street murderer in history, Jack the Ripper. By an unhappy coincidence, the Ripper and the Batman surface in Gotham at the same time, so the Batman is widely rumoured to be the murderer. This becomes academic when a bloody knife

and [illegible] Bruce is tried, found guilty and sentenced to death.

Reminiscent of *The Dark Knight Returns*, the artwork (penciled by Michael Mignola, inked by P Craig Russell) set the mood of the time and location well. By using simple sketchy images and dull moody colours (by David Hornung) a grim old-fashioned world is recreated, full of dark corners in which a street stalker might hide.

Brian Augustyn's script is light on text in many places and tells the mildly amusing story with clarity and at a rational pace. Its only main fault is some artificial-sounding dialogue. It really could have been Sherlock Holmes in place of the Batman, as the piece is meant as whodunnit yarn than an action packed adventure. But it almost simply unlike not to wonder who Augustyn chose to play his Ripper.

Far from being an essential purchase but inexpensive enough for an impulse buy, *Gotham By Gaslight* a nineteenth century Batman is regrettably a lot less interesting than his in modern-day set.

**Warren Laysworth**

## THE DUNGEON BOOK I THE BLACK TOWER

What do writers do if they want to use the old trappings of fantasy but do it I want to be accused (behind repetition)? Why, use the relatively new device of producing a series of novels in a shared world environment and add a big name in the title to ensure that it sells. Of course.

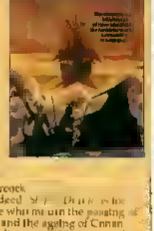
Harold Robbins did it once with disastrous results, and now Philip Jose Farmer has. How do a similar path with *The Dungeon Book I The Black Tower* (Grafton, £2.99) is a major question, when you are dealing with a genre of fantasy and myth and the sort. Perhaps you're likely to find it most role playing games. Anything is possible here as the world which Farmer describes is open-ended and appears in have few rules.

The first novel in the series called *The Black Tower* and written

# PIRATE FANTASY

## SHIP OF DREAMS

**Brian Lumley**
*Publisher* **Headline**
*Format* **PB £2.99**
*Category* **Fantasy**




Davis Hero and Edith The Wonderer continue their passage through the Dreamlands, a journey started in book one of this series, *Hero of Dreams*.

Much has happened since Hero and Edith realised that deep took [illegible] another dimension, [illegible] Lovecraftian creatures, brooding, malevolent conquerors and castles full of traps.

In case you haven't read the first book, Hero is technically the shaman of the ornithoids, [illegible] a protégé in the real world by the healer. As Shaman he [illegible] which lead to reality and therefore trapped in increasingly realistic dreams. Edith has just lost his bride to be because she can return to the waking world and the two of them, like Burroughs John Carter of Mars, have to get used to their origin world.

Most of the book describes an episodic journey in a pirate sky galleon called Cadaver. This odyssey is similar to that undertaken in C S Lewis's *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, but Moorcockian in content. Although Brian Lumley's high fantasy books are not quite as outlandish as Moorcock's, the chapter headings such as The Snatchers of the Dark, The Running Thing and Swords of Setanta, together with the plot structure prove that he is as successful at writing this type of story as Moorcock, Howard and Mr Creek.

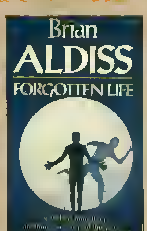
Indeed, *Ship of Dreams* is the those who miss on the passing of Elric and the ageing of Conan. Hero lives up to his name and should keep pulp readers addicted for some time to come.

**John Gilbert**

# MENOPAUSAL SHAKES

## FORGOTTEN LIFE

**Brian Aldiss**
*Publisher* **Macmillan**
*Format* **PB £3.99**




If you kids think you know what it's like to be old, you've yet to learn that. If friends are presidents of companies while you are still playing the toy boy, you'll understand life and it depresses you. Then join Clement Winter, the tragic comic protagonist of Brian Aldiss's latest novel.

While not strictly fantasy, horror or SF, *Forgotten Life* dares to examine the fears of middle-age from the point of view of a man with big dreams who, like many people, just hasn't accomplished as much as the stars at this life.

His feeling of underachievement is generally made worse by two unrelated events in his life. The first is his wife's image as a fantasy writer. She could so easily have been one of life's failures but in spite of psychiatrist Winter's almost guaranteed her success and set himself up for feelings of inadequacy.

This inadequacy is further reinforced, when his brother Joe [illegible] exploits [illegible] attracted to the [illegible] Anne. All seems lost but [illegible] say from the depths of [illegible] in this case the mentor, perhaps [illegible] can come to [illegible] and in a myriad facets of this peoples personalities and histories. Winter eventually finds solace.

*Forgotten Life* is likely to be an uncomfortable read for those approaching Winter's own age at forty-nine or anyone who doesn't want to dwell on that cusp in a certain age, but Aldiss adds humour to a subject which, at first sight, seemed to me to be humourless. He also shows that he is a consistently good writer.

**John Gilbert**

by Richard A Lupoff (Bantam paperback £3.99), follows Clive Barker's quest to find his twin brother. Neville finds the mysterious multi-levelled dungeon. It is a place in which heroes are born and where readers who enjoy role-playing games in masters will find ideas for their games. It is not however a place from which fantasy novels are spawned and this, while Dungeon venture across genre, is so much yet upon the cover. Former intra to be mysterious in his foreword with a role call of his own works but unfortunately none of his references me that this series is a worthwhile project.

**John Gilbert**

## ARROWS OF EROS

Sex and SF, at first sight, there is not a lot more to greater opposites. Sex is usually an emotional adventure while science fiction is many people to wide on the future.

Arthur Harold Schechter and David Aldiss Stewart ably demonstrates in *Arrows of Eros* (NEL paperback, £3.50) the realm of sexual adventure is ripe for ripe for any form of human endeavour.

Several of the writers in this anthology have already approached the subject of sex in their novels, though not solely in the SF genre. Tanith Lee for instance is well known for the erotic, though not necessarily sexual, ambiences in some of her books. Her contribution to this volume, *The Beautiful Thing*, *Vivid* is however slightly different to her usual fare, harder in its SF with an emphasis on humour created by clashing cultures.

Alternatively, David Langford's story, *The Motherlum*, at first appears closer in tone and creates an atmosphere in which most pain shop perverts would delight. Brian Stableford plunges through the earth to an underground civilisation set up during an ice age. The inhabitants of this underworld are only just considering the possibility that what now exists in the Midlands above may just inside them gloomy, wintry. It's a sort of Mr Rickman in reverse story and harkens back to the days before Stableford's *Empire of Fear* when he turned out a great deal of high quality pulp SF.

Warrington, who is last becoming a favourite of mine, Garry Kilworth, what's in not sure actually lives on this planet. Stephen Gallagher is an accomplished SF writer at heart and Kim Newman who provides his usual humour and sound story sense.

Editor Alex Stewart is to be congratulated on a strong performance, though as I said when I reviewed Ramsey Campbell's second *Skeff Arrows of Eros* is less about sex as much than the strange nature of twists that love and lust can evoke.

**John Gilbert**

Iain M Banks is a perfect contributor to a volume about SF sex. Combining the weirdness of *The Wasp Factory* the stark dangerous alter reality of *The Bridge* and the straight SF of *The Player of Games*, his story *Odd Attachment*, tells of unacknowledged love with a difference.

Other entrants to the lists talk about sex stakes include Freda Warrington, who is last becoming a favourite of mine, Garry Kilworth, what's in not sure actually lives on this planet, Stephen Gallagher is an accomplished SF writer at heart and Kim Newman who provides his usual humour and sound story sense.

Editor Alex Stewart is to be congratulated on a strong performance, though as I said when I reviewed Ramsey Campbell's second *Skeff Arrows of Eros* is less about sex as much than the strange nature of twists that love and lust can evoke.

**John Gilbert**

## DEVIANT

**Harold Schechter**
*Publisher* **New English Library**
*Format* **PB, £3.99**
*Category* **Non-fiction**

Ed Gein, a quiet well mannered American backwoods farmer of average intelligence, is the man solely responsible for many of the stalk and slash horror movie successes at the past thirty years.

As a child he was the victim of a domineering mother, a drunkard sire father who often beat his sons, and the kids at the local school who thought him peculiar. As a man, located with a perverse love for his dead mother, he literally butchered local women all of whom failed in his eyes to live up to her saintly image. He was also implicated in the fiery fatal accident that left his brother shortly before his mother's death.

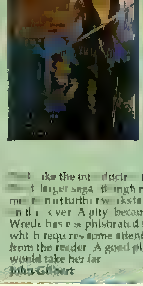
Arthur Harold Schechter begins the book by identifying Gein with Norman Bates, the pathetic killer of Robert Bloch's novel *Psycho*, which was later filmed by Alfred Hitchcock. Schechter also alludes to the fact [illegible] the [illegible] a larger saga, though no [illegible] in truth, [illegible] in the cover. A pity because Wrede has a sophisticated style which requires some attention from the reader. A good plot would take her far.

**John Gilbert**

# THAT OLD BLACK MAGIC

## CAUGHT IN CRYSTAL

**Patricia C Wrede**
*Publisher* **Futura**
*Format* **PB £3.50**
*Category* **Fantasy**



Evil sorcerers lies at the heart of [illegible] in which a series of [illegible] and settled on [illegible] than a millennium past cannot be forgotten by the human inhabitants of [illegible].

The Wars of Binding were waged by the supernatural races called the Wyrde, the Neiti, the Elves and others against the humans without the result advantages of the other races. The humans were at a disadvantage [illegible] when the other races left the land. The human Elders learned the arts of magic.

Unfortunately magic is not the only evil in the land. The Windhorne mountains house the Twisted Tower which in turn contains a crystal that holds an ancient corruption. Its intended, a wizard a spell, but these wizards are weakening and a champion must be found to fight what is meant time will be settled on the tower. The champion is Kaiel a young dancer, mainly, past her prime, who must find my in the legendary exploits of her youth.

Sounds like an interesting concept but the book's plot is too contrived for my liking and the characters, although full of life are clumsy in the functions they perform. *Caught in Crystal* also [illegible] the [illegible] a larger saga, though no [illegible] in truth, [illegible] in the cover. A pity because Wrede has a sophisticated style which requires some attention from the reader. A good plot would take her far.

**John Gilbert**

that Gein provoked the inspiration in such films as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Halloween* and *Friday 13th* though for reasons that become apparent later in the book, he doesn't automatically label him as a horror movie abomination made real.

By the end of his introduction Schechter has you believing that Gein was a psychopathic creature who was hardly human but then he has you with a series of tragic events that probably served to turn the quiet little boy into a morose fiend. *Deviant* is written in the style of a novel yet it describes the investigation into Gein's crimes and doesn't dwell on the acts of violence as they were committed. At the end of the book, you might be quite feeling repulsion at the acts of murder catalogued in its pages but sympathy for the pathetic little man who committed them.

Gein is truly something to behold and Schechter's book acquaints you with his personality in the most unnerving way. *Deviant* is one of the decade's best true crime careers comparable only with *Killing For Company* which described British mass murderer Dennis Nilsen's crimes in an unsensational way. It is a book that everyone interested in the why's and wherefores of murder should read. Shocking, compulsive and well of true investigational untainted journalism.

**John Gilbert**

## CRESTWOOD HEIGHTS

The evils of scientific experimentation have long been a subject of debate. If the news is not full of terrible tales about tests on animals or genetic research we are constantly bombarded with dread information about pollution.

Christopher Hyde has identified a wide range of techno-fears and manipulated them into brilliant chunks novel *Crestwood Heights* (Headline paperback £4.50). This concerns a small community which has been set aside as one huge gen-experiment by the scientific establishment. The town even has a slogan: The Future Is Now, and families living there are expected to take on board incredible high tech innovations which control environment and in many cases lifestyles.

As you can probably gather the place sounds a little too perfect and when Kelly Rhine inherits a house in Crestwood Heights she makes the mistake of letting them. She soon discovers that during decades in which the community has existed strange events have mysteriously and unnecessarily died out in a scientific dream which could be excusable in warped minds but for the financial greed of the masterminds behind the project.

Hyde writes a wicked thriller backed up by as much scientific information as necessary and no more. But, as I commented in my review of his last book *Jesse's Falls* his writing to date is some what imitative. Others who have tapped the genre such as Michael Crichton and Dean R Koontz. Hyde is however more than just a mimic. *Crestwood Heights* shows that he can create knuckle-cracking action, mystifying action and only slightly plastic main characters in a tight mesh of swift change narrative.

But it's back to the drawing board in print.

**John Gilbert**

## GIGER'S ALIEN

Swiss artist H R Giger first hit the limelight with his film designs for Ridley Scott's *Alien* and quite rightly so. It is not often that a serious artist is called to help design a film but Giger's grotesque paintings and style caught Dan O'Bannon's eye when he was involved in pre-production work on *Alien*. The morbidly erotic visions of slimy monstrosities painstakingly airbrushed in greys and browns seemed just what the film and its alien production required.

This book, first published in 1979 by Big O Publishing and now reissued by Titan Books (£14.95 is Giger's own record of his involvement in the project. Giger was meant to working alone in his studio in Zurich and this book documents his trials and tribulations in the film world which was an new to him. The account is fascinating, revealing as it does part of Giger's psyche while allowing a behind the-scenes look at special effects production on a difficult movie.

The real stars here are the reproductions of his sketches and paintings which meticulously and in all details begin the creation of Alien as a living world which lies ready and waiting for discovery by the Nostromo's crew. It is equally interesting to see drawings turned to three-dimensional reality as documented by the numerous photos of models and sets in construction.

This is a book for *Alien* fans while giving Giger aficionados deep insight into the master's mind. Newcomers to his art should be sufficiently hooked to hope more of his work will be made available in book form. Giger unfortunately does not seem to have involved himself in film work since *Alien*, choosing to concentrate on the gallery circuit instead. Perhaps a reissue of another Big O Publishing book, the late Seventies' which covered most of his output, would be good for Titan.

**Oliver Frey**

## LAST SHIP HOME

This second volume of paintings illustrations and designs by Rodney Matthews (Paper Tiger hardback £14.95 paperback £8.95) continues where the previous collection left off. One cannot criticise this book for its production. Paper Tiger are always excellent and the colour reproduction are pristine and of high quality. Nigel Suckling's accompanying text is informative while it teaches we but then the pictures should speak for themselves.

I put Matthews into the same category as Patrick Woodroffe and lesser illustrators his paintings are distinguished by their obsessive attention to detail and high finish, a meticulousness which all too often results in mere decorativeness with no sense of drama. To call Matthews twee would be unjust, but for all his

FEAR competition

# WINE AND DINE WITH RAMSEY CAMPBELL

**WOULD YOU** like to have lunch with one of Britain's most influential horror authors? His novel **Ancient Images**, a tale of the hunt for a lost horror film, is out in paperback in February and he feels like celebrating. So we've arranged for him to meet the lucky winner of this competition for chow, a chin wag and the opportunity to receive a copy of the book from his own fair hands.

**NINE RUNNERS UP** win a signed copy of the paperback, courtesy of Ramsey and his publishers, Legend.

**TO WIN *just name the first horror novel that Ramsey had published*.** Send your answer on the back of a postcard or stamped addressed envelope to *Campbell's Soup Competition, FEAR, Newfield Publications, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*. All entries should be in by 15 February 1990 and should not be submitted by employees of the participating companies or their mothers, fathers, uncles, aunts, grandmothers

# SWASHBUCKLING FUN

## WIZARD AT LARGE

**Terry Brooks**
*Publisher* **Futura**
*Format* PB, £3.50
*Category* **Fantasy**

A welcome return to the Magic Kingdom, first visited in the novel *Talon Kingdom for Sale, Sold* and the continuance of a humour style which Terry Brooks [illegible] developed when he launched his Shannara trilogy. [illegible] Brooks has decided that the boundaries of the Magic Kingdom are not enough for him and develops the planet Earth as a parallel world. A soldier court [illegible] Chronicle. There strive to [illegible] the work of the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Child's Play II: Andy with his Chucky

# LIVING DOLL

## CHILD'S PLAY

*Starring* **Catherine Hicks, Chris Sarandon, Alex Vincent, Brad Dourif, Dinah Manoff**
*Director* **Tom Holland**
*Distributor* **Warner Home Video**
**Cert 18 90 mins**
**Rental**

In this the one doll movie that worked in 1969 screenplay director and acting all combined to produce one of this year's most memorable supernatural thrillers.

Tom Holland has always been one of my favourite directors together because he always manages to make well worked 60-genres down squeezing a much-humour out of every conceptions inhumanly possible. The premise in this case similarly implausible but by the movie's end, Chucky the evil doll is the centre of the saga – almost very real to the viewer as well as to the characters.

As ever Holland opens with a bang. Cop Chris Sarandon investigates a murderer The Strangler (Dourif) in a toy shop where the killer is shot down. But before he dies, The Strangler uses voodoo to transmigrate into one of the talking dolls that has tumbled down from a display.

The doll finds its way into Catherine Hicks' home and becomes an ever-present part of her small-son's life. One night the boy's babysitter appears to take a leap from the kitchen window of their high rise flat and the boy says Chucky frightened her. Hicks is first dress I believe his story but soon both she and Sarandon find themselves in a battle of souls with The Strangler's new incarnation.

Sarandon and Hicks are marvellous as a team but Brad Dourif floors them all as Chucky's marvellously wicked voice. In challenge adverts not to smile when the doll's sweet little voice lisps sweetly to

Doesn't anyone want to play with Chucky?

Dourif [illegible] Great entertainment and the gore is kept to a minimum so even [illegible] don't wish hyper [illegible] movies can still view with immunity.

**John Gilbert**

## MUTANT ON THE BOUNTY

*Starring* **John Beake, Deborah Benson, John Furey, Victoria Catlin, John Fleck, Kyle T Heffner**
*Director* **Robert Torrance**
*Distributor* **Futuristic Entertainment**
**Cert 18 90 mins**
**Rental**

Take a plot built a saxophonist mutant add humour and [illegible] the mix in that *Star Shuttle* should have been.

Twenty three years ago Max, the ugly hero of the piece was leaving the USS Constitution for his next gig, when the transporter malfunctioned leaving him as little more than a stream of particles stranded in space.

It is now the present day and Max's beam is picked up and unscrambled by the nutty crew of the USS Bounty but their transporter comes up with the wrong transfer pattern and the material seems a smoking wreck his face mauled with bits of [illegible] interstellar space debris. After an hysterical attempt at plastic surgery by the ship's chain smoking vampire doctor Max has to learn that he missed his gig, all his friends are probably dead and he's one ugly sucker. He's also lost his luggage and gained a strange looking pack which belongs to some fairly wacky bounty hunters. Even he wouldn't want to be him when they find out where he's hiding.

Robert Torrance's film, though obviously made on a miniscule budget, relies upon the comedy talents of the cast and some half decent computer graphics. The ship's sardonic captain who occasionally turns into a transvestite when his circuits overload deserves an award for camp acting and the ship's doctor (Victoria Catlin) should be struck off the medical register for the way she treats her patients.

This film may deserve a turkey but even it watch it and make it a golden one.

**John Gilbert**

## WITCHCRAFT 2: THE TEMPTRESS

*Starring* Charles Salomon, Mia Ruiz, Delia Sheppard, David L. Hemb, Jay Richardson, Frank Woods
*Dir'd by* Mark Woods
*Distributor* Colourbox
Cert 18, 86 mins
Rental

What would you do if you had an ashtray as oversized [illegible] and a luxury dog bowl [illegible] each in a sack-covered [illegible]? Probably complain to the nearest post office. But if you're William, the ageing disciplinarian legs-student at the [illegible] institute. This may [illegible] much [illegible] likely [illegible] by of [illegible] keen on this idea so, with the help of his friend Boomer, girlfriend Michelle and her Reverend father, he tries to stop the Temptress from convincing him to evil. It all happens in a most tedious disjointed manner. The direction is basic, the editing illogical and continuity apparently unheard of. Apart from the adequate performance of Michelle (by Mia Ruiz), the entire little short of horrendous. Dolores the Temptress is played with more hamthan Dewhurst and William is a very flat lead role, perhaps because his acting appears to be fifteen years older than his student character.

[illegible] is well beyond this.

A tempting moment in Wicked Witchcraft 2?

The boxes are being sent to William by a busty blonde witch called Dolores, the Temptress of the title, and it's she who tells him of his family history. William is related to John and Elizabeth Stockton, witches who were burnt at the stake three hundred years ago but who survived to bring about the eventual conception of William within the body of Grace, his non-witch natural mother. Now it is time for William to fulfil his purpose as witch leader and spread evil magic across the world.

Naturally, William can't be kept in this idea so, with the help of his friend Boomer, girlfriend Michelle and her Reverend father, he tries to stop the Temptress from convincing him to evil. It all happens in a most tedious disjointed manner. The direction is basic, the editing illogical and continuity apparently unheard of. Apart from the adequate performance of Michelle (by Mia Ruiz), the entire lot is short of horrendous. Dolores the Temptress is played with more ham than Dewhurst and William is a very flat lead role, perhaps because his acting appears to be fifteen years older than his student character.

[illegible] is well beyond this low budget flick, but it [illegible] hall its length, though entertainment value is afforded by trying to guess exactly how bad the inconsistently styled but considerably ear-grating soundtrack can get. This pearl of a title should be avoided at all (or at least most) costs: a load of old warlocks if ever there was one.

**Warren Lapworth**

## THE BLOB

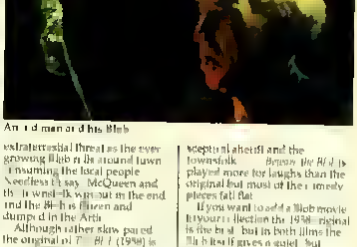
*Starring* Steve McQueen
*Director* Irvin S. Yeaworth Jnr
*Distributor* Bravewold
Cert 15, £9.99

## BEWARE THE BLOB

*Starring* Robert Walker
*Director* Larry Hagman
*Distributor* Bravewold
Cert 15, £9.99

A meteorite falls to Earth and is discovered by an old man, but [illegible] jelly inside the meteorite attacks itself to his hand and begins slowly to absorb his arm. He is rescued and rushed to hospital by our teenage hero (Steve McQueen in an early starring role) and his girlfriend, but the jelly gets loose to devour a patient, nurse and doctor.

McQueen and his young friends [illegible] warn a sceptical sheriff [illegible] and the [illegible]



An old man and his Blob

extraterrestrial threat as the ever growing Blob is absorbed town, devouring the local people. Needless to say, McQueen and his friends keep out of the end and the Blob is frozen and dumped in the Arctic.

Although rather slow paced, the original *The Blob* (1958) is nevertheless entertaining.

Released on video [illegible] by Bravewold [illegible] sceptical sheriff and the townsfolk. *Beware the Blob* is played more for laughs than the original but most of the comedy pieces fall flat.

If you want to add a Blob movie to your collection, the 1958 original is fine to do, but in both films the Blob itself gives a quiet, but nonetheless absorbing, performance.

**David Western**

Steve McQueen: teenage blobbing with

## HOWLING 4

*Starring* **Romy Windsor Michael T Weiss Suzanne Severed**
*Director* **John Hough**
*Distributor* **President**
**Cert 18 89 mins**
**Rental**

Bereavedfilm author Marie (Romy Windsor) discovers that she is seeing things. Is she cracking up under the strain? Maybe a break will help. She and her husband Richard rent a strange just outside Drago, a very small town indeed which seems to have a more six inhabitants. Still there is the sexy Eleanor who runs the antique shop and who Richard really has the hots for.

Things go from bad to worse and every night poor Marie hears howling in the woods around the cottage and strange visions of a ghostly nun in the daytime. Janice, a former nun and friend of Marie's is investigating circumstances surrounding the demise of Sister Ruth who died the previous year. The two women team up. Just in the meantime Richard is getting chomped by Eleanor and the werewolves are everywhere.

What can the women do? Not a lot really. *Howling 4* is a mildly entertaining, through rather flatly directed film which ultimately offers very little in the way of excitement. And naturally the conclusion leaves enough loose ends for yet another sequel.

**David Western**

Nina but it's Eleanor she appears in Howling 4

## BLOOD ARENA

*Starring* **Paul Satterfield Hamilton Camp Claudia Christian Marc Alaimo Armin Shimerman**
*Director* **Peter Manoogian**
*Distributor* **Entertainment In Video**
**Cert 15 93 mins**
**Rental**

A hard a vast space station, crunchie and hunky hero Steve Armstrong (Paul Satterfield) soon discovers life in 4038 isn't easy. Working in a cafe, he defends his four-armed friend and colleague Shorty (Hamilton Camp) from an aggressive alien but his violent reaction results in both he and Shorty being sacked. He credit crunch, he's stranded millions of miles from his Earth home with no money.

In an attempt to generate funds, Steve and a scrofty mate. There's a mad by the crooked

## FROM THE DEAD OF NIGHT

*Starring* **Lindsay Wagner, Bruce Boxleitner, Robin Thomas, Robert Presky Diahann Carol**
*Director* **Paul Wendkos**
*Distributor* **Braveworld**
**Cert 15 130 mins**
**Rental**

Joanna Darby has got it made. She's a highly successful American fashion designer with a yuppie boyfriend Glenn and her latest pattern is about to get its airing on the catwalk. But during a party she wanders distractedly into the garden and almost drowns in the swimming pool. She is revived by Glenn and ex-boyfriend Peter but not before she had an alarming out-of-body experience in which she floats above her drowning body and then drifts down a smoky tunnel towards bright light. She passes six dark figures who try to stop her on her return journey down the tunnel to life and consciousness.

Joanna is disturbed by the strange experience even more so when the very next day she is almost run down by a speeding car and then while in holiday in New Mexico is attacked by a previously friendly tourist. Her investigations and hunt to discover that the two people involved who were both killed in their tributes were what are known as walkers people who through clerical error or other reasons are reanimated as having two times and causes of death.

Joanna speaks with a guy guy known to Peter who explains that the dead want her amongst them and that as she passed six figures during her experience she walkers will try to claim her. So in the next thirty minutes she has to survive the attacks of four others before she is safe.

As well as having an awful sexy pop title *From the Dead of Night* used to be a mini series and has been cut down for video rental. But it hasn't been cut enough it still wall over two hours long and full of overstatement and unnecessary scenes. The fashion business and the trials and tribulations of Joanna's relationships with Glenn and Peter are all things better left to *Dynasty* and other such soaps.

Joanna's encounters with the temporarily undead walkers are wholly unexciting and utterly contrived and the last part of the film relies on four deaths conveniently occurring in less than 36 hours and all within a one mile radius of Lee. Even so the US is portrayed as a violent and dangerous place in most thrillers but I still think Americans should look into it.

Lindsay Wagner hasn't been seen by the Great British Public since *The Bionic Woman* and although she puts in a good performance as a stylish damsel in distress it's a shame she bothered to show herself in this ponderous epic. Cut by another half hour it would have had enough pace to pass the time of night but as it stands, it's like the packaging says. Don't disturb the walkers!

**Warren Lapworth**

From the Dead of Night a little foresight

## WORLD GONE WILD

*Starring* **Bruce Dern, Michael Pare, Catherine Mary Stewart, Adam Ant, Alan Autry**
*Director* **Lee H Katzin**
*Distributor* **Warner Home Video**
**Cert 18 90 mins**
**Rental**

After his moderate success in *Mr Birds* Bruce Dern must be thinking he's an industrial pig to have this new just turkey appear on video.

From the outset you can tell that writer Inga Lamarche has a thing for Fifties Dystopias. We start with Dern as first person introduction in the deeply post apocalyptic hamlet of Lost Walls.

Miles away from the big bad towns where rioters are rife and water is in short supply these survivors are well surviving until the psychopath (played with zest by one time pop star Adam Ant) arrives with his launch of lunatic wannabe warshipmen. They rape, pillage and threaten to blow back.

Dern is not keen to wait for another visit and takes a trip to the nearest town where Michael Pare and his native mercenaries await the chance to play ass-kicking and agree under the weediest of motivations to return to Lost Walls and answer that the Ant and his killers get their just deserts. What follows is a series of self consciously strung together episodic scenes featuring Pare as love interest Catherine Mary Stewart dream sequence sadism

# ON THE ROPES

Shadow potential gives Shorty the opportunity to [illegible] the money for a [illegible] ticket home but [illegible] by the hassles from villainous boss Rogan (Marc Vel[illegible]) who soon tracks them down. The ticket is untraceable, [illegible] gives Steve ten hours to turn them in, [illegible] Rogan threatens to kill Shorty.

Shadow [illegible] Lucia is [illegible] from Quinn's female management. At his fights, The Arena is packed [illegible] the space station, and a [illegible] match [illegible] Shorty versus [illegible] battle each other one-[illegible] Bald-haired [illegible] match. The only way Steve [illegible] Quinn back is by fighting in the Arena.

His first fight is a success and [illegible] with enthusiasm, he [illegible] to become the first ever Human Arena champ that's has been for fifty years. But with the current champ, Hurn, managed [illegible] for [illegible] Rogan, the [illegible] won't be easy.

Imagine a cross between Rocky, Buck Rogers and Al Capone movies and you'll have a few idea of what *Arena* is like. The emphasis is on *Rocky*, with Hurn an alien equivalent to a mean Russian and viewers find themselves forced to root for Rocky Steve.

The set designers can't decide whether to go for gritty cyberpunk or squeaky-clean high tech, and most of the aliens are derivative of well known sources (notably the cantina scene from *Star Wars*). The most enduring of them is Shorty, a character played mainly for laughs (several of them trivial, using his four arms). Big boss Rogan and his infinitely sneaky cohort Weezil (Armin Shimerman) inject criminal and gangster elements that prove this is really an old familiar movie plot in the future clothing.

*Arena* doesn't pretend to be original or clever, but succeeds brilliantly at being a quite entertaining family movie. Dull certainly won't want to throw in the towel.

**Warren Lapworth**

Battling away in the Arena

The good guys in World Gone Wild

again [illegible] Fire and Alan Autry a grisly but throwaway death – he really should have stayed at home in *In the Heat of the Night*. All in this fairly thin story line is pumped up with an injection of fast-paced action, [illegible] man. The result is conclusive for the good guys. Ant goes up in flames in a fairly unspectacular anticlimax. But then, once you've persevered through to the end of the tape, it's unlikely you'll be expecting anything better.

**John Gilbert**

## SCARECROWS

*Starring* **Ted Vernon, Michael Simms, Richard Vidan**
*Director* **William Wesley**
*Distributor* **Maduss**
**Cert 18, 79 mins**
**Rental**

Crime doesn't pay, particularly in films such as this. Five trained commandos steal three million dollars in notes and hijack a plane to make good their escape. An argument develops and the money is thrown out the plane with two of the robbers following it. The pilot lands and all but one of the thieves regroup in an abandoned house.

The missing robber gets lost in nearby fields and is slain by one of the many scarecrows grouped around the house. He isn't dead yet, though, he attacks the other robbers who have to decapitate him to stop his psychotic behaviour. They discover that many of his organs are missing and his torso is full of straw. During the remainder of the film, the other characters wander the fields gathering money and being carved up by the scarecrows, who strongly believe in spare part surgery and replace their straw and cloth with flesh to keep them alive animated.

The basic concept of animated scarecrows maiming anyone who dares disturb them is not a bad one but in practice it certainly is bad. Terrible, in fact. Early on, there are major inconsistencies. The twin prop planes has the truly remarkable ability to hover or circle very tightly indeed, while appearing to travel in a straight line. The female robber has near telescopic eyesight and is able to see everything happening on the ground in perfect detail. And, oh, it was she who spotted the convenient clear strip of land amongst the dense trees and crops – perfect for landing a plane on, but quite where the scarecrows found their nice shiny stainless steel knives and cleavers is a mystery.

*Scarecrows* is short, thankfully, but still would have benefited from additional cuts. If you've seen one straw filled cloth sack, you've seen 'em all really. Better still, those tedious linking scenes could have been replaced by some bloody death scenes in the main. Scarecrows gore is artificial, tailor's dummy stuff. To be quite honest, spending 79 minutes standing in the middle of a daisy field tied to a pole is mildly preferable to viewing this fatuous piece of nas[illegible].

**Warren Lapworth**

Scarecrows all wired up and nowhere to has?

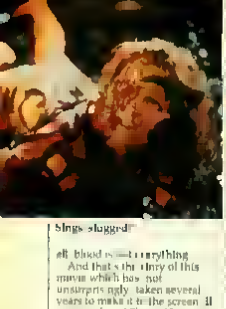
## SLUGS

*Starring* **Michael Garfield, Kim Terry, Philip Machale Alicia Moro**
*Director* **J P Simon**
*Distributor* **New World**
**Cert 18 90 mins**
**Rental**

You'll believe a slug can swim! Yes, this grossly offensive and immature slimy pal movie making has to be seen to be believed.

I am not surprised that Shaun Hutson (author of the original novel) has disowned it. All that he wanted to do, library fodder discover whether his gruesome gastropods existed. He found that they did and, despite all the gory mayhem, the creatures in that novel behave realistically.

Not so the film. Here we have a boyfriend sucked into a lake by slugs who are no doubt wearing aqualungs; we have slugs who survive in a stomach full of acid and milk long enough to gnaw through brains, gut into the brain and explode a diner's head in full view of other restaurant customers. One also suspects that the amphibians in this crudely exploitative horror film have changed when the scriptwriter or director insists the naked lad's little titillation, admittedly on the part of female viewers. In one of the novel's scenes left largely unscathed for the screen, a very muscular young man romps stark naked on a bed with a similarly nude girl. Only when he steps off the bed are we asked to believe that the flesh is swarming with slugs when polish off the boy and girl with bloody gusto. But any horror in this scene is quickly diminished by the emphasis on nudity, and I hope, black comedy. Yet [illegible] the director is trying [illegible] I felt [illegible]



Slugs: slugged!

all, blood is [illegible] anything.

And that's the story of this movie which has not unsurprisingly taken several years to make it to the screen. If you're a fan of Shaun Hutson's work, more than hope – and that's in the recommendation of the man himself!

**John Gilbert**

## LEATHERFACE: TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE 3

*Starring* **Kate Hodge, William Butler, Ken Foree, R A Mihailoff, Miriam Byrd-Nethery**
*Director* **Jeff Burr**
*Distributor* **New Line**
**Cert TBA**

New Line may be in trouble with Freddy Krueger's drop in popularity, but to bring back undoubtedly the most notorious of movie killers? There must be some big excuse!

That excuse may be purely financial but on the basis of what we've seen, the movie could establish grounds for an origin again. Originally written by the irrepressible and extremely talented David J Schow (see **FEAR** issue 13), in this sequel Leatherface gets away with just about as much as you can in America without being subbed out of existence or banned outright.

The hot licks start when Ryan and Michelle, a young couple on their way to deliver a Mercedes in Florida, take a detour through Texas back country which is unfortunately inhabited by mass murderer Leatherface and his family.

After their springings down an incline, the couple are [illegible] captured by Leatherface and taken back to the ranch where Mama prepares Ryan and his chestnuts. From then on it is a quick descent into a maelstrom of butchery as the [illegible] and his growing kindred [illegible] patriots take revenge on [illegible] (see page 18 of this issue)

Williamson Texas

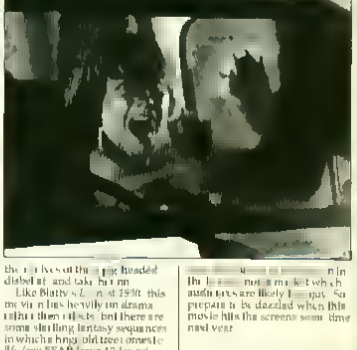
The meaty mayhem in this film harks back to the second *TCM* and even puts one in mind of the more gruesome aspects of *Tales From The Crypt*, for the simple reason that the *TCM 3* admits that there could be more monsters than just Leatherface and family in the Texas [illegible]

## THE GUARDIAN

*Starring* **Dwier Brown, Carey Lowell, Jenny Seagrove**
*Director* **William Friedkin**
*Distributor* **Universal/UIP**
**Cert TBA**

William Friedkin joins Brian De Palma and William Peter Blatty in a spectacular assault on the horror movie industry. Like Blatty, who has just completed *Exorcist III* (1990), Friedkin has been away from the genre for a while, but *The Guardian* is a romp through dark faerie territory, in which the forces of nature infiltrate their innate evil. It is a distinct [illegible] that Friedkin used in his thriller *Rampage* and in that year and one that fits neatly into a horror field which has been overlaid with Freudian and all that evil.

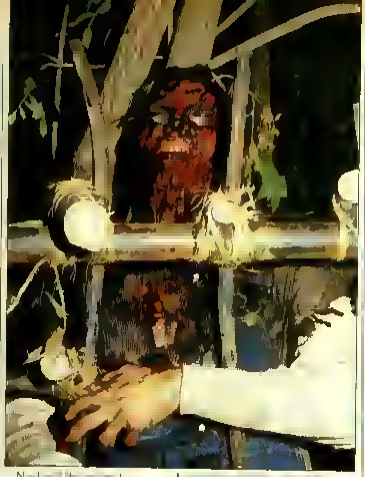
Here we have a young couple who move away from town house and into the countryside. They employ a nanny (Seagrove) in lieu of a young son, but soon begin to wonder just who is in charge of the boy's future. The nanny is linked in a tree demon who survives by supping on the lives of young innocents. It wants the child and Seagrove will have him unless the parents can rid



the [illegible] lives of the [illegible] page headed disbelief and take [illegible]

Like Blatty's *Exorcist* (1990), this movie is heavily in drama rather than effects, but there are some startling fantasy sequences in which a hoop old tree ornaments [illegible] (see **FEAR** issue 15 for set report). *The Guardian* represents a [illegible] in the [illegible] not a market which audiences are likely [illegible] So prepare to be dazzled when this movie hits the screens some time next year.

***FEAR US PREVIEW**

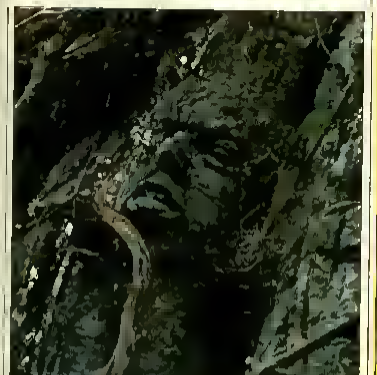


N[illegible] still be [illegible] in the m[illegible] make [illegible] classical [illegible] battle [illegible] see that New [illegible] film's makers [illegible] 43 is the most [illegible] possible [illegible] contemporary censorship problems (see last issue's American Nightmares for details).

The film has no UK release date [illegible] has [illegible]

dislik[illegible] with luck, bu[illegible] graceful[illegible] he shi[illegible] recently [illegible] and *Bat Tr[illegible]*. If he doesn't several new horror flicks including Brian Yuzna's *Bride of Re-Animator* – just one example – may be substantially stripped.

***FEAR US PREVIEW**



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We would also like to stress that the doll is a promotional device and not suitable for use by young children.

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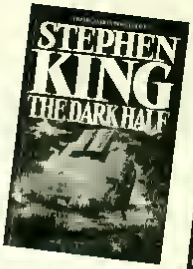


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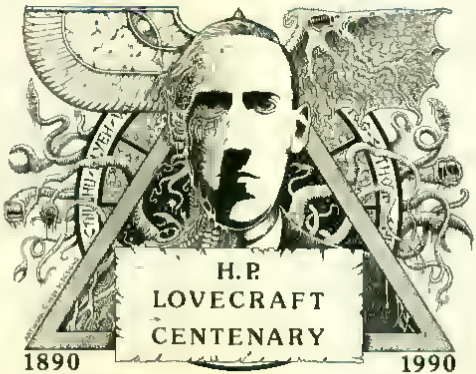


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Michael Stewart profile James Herbert story The Vineyard FX meeting Steve Pattington interviews Deadly Serious The Haunting of Harry – Alan Grant gives his review inside of Dracula Brian Nicholas Hunt Nightmare Hitchcock film The Birds Film volume 2 Graham Masterton interview

**FEAR No 10**
The Dark Half an interview from Stephen King's new novel Elvis speaks out author Tanith Lee visits the Hammer craft, Drew Wilson and the Cornwallers at Ralph McQuarrie on the set of Nightmare on Elm Street Hammer horror film The Hill Top Shadows comic book horror and Dan Lloyd and Kim Newman on the big screen James Cameron's The Abyss

**FEAR No 11**
Jumbo film extra from Christopher Fowler directors Steve Miner and Steve De Jarnatt producer Gale Anne Hurd author Ramsey McDonald The Return of the Swamp Thing writer Stephen Gallagher, Robert Englund as Freddy of the Dreams, The Exorcist 1990

**FEAR No.12**
Jaime Hernandez short story Kim Newman on the Serial Killer Chris Baker comics Roddy McDowall Shaun Hutson on Horror Ralph Vaughan Mike Jefferies American Zone Paul La Villette in The Mask and The Nail Design

**FEAR No 13**
Guy N Smith short story Robert Bloch profiles Richard P Rubinstein on Stephen King's movie adaptations novelist Mark Morris Amanda Downing Ralph McQuarrie's Night Dream of Vamps William Francis in Rubble Skeleton Bleeds on A Night Mare Sam Street Clive Barker demos part 2 FEAR at the early horror movies

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## EYE STRAIN FROM EDDINGS?

Dear FEAR
I have recently read David Eddings latest book *The Sorceress of Darshiva* and was shocked by three things.

First the phrase rat-faced like Dreasnian is not used to describe one of the characters in the book until page 60. Second as far as I can remember this phrase is not used again.

Either of these facts taken on their own might not appear to be very significant but, bearing in mind that in the previous eight volumes one could not read more than five pages without coming across the phrase, together they cause in the reader a certain feeling of vague unease.

Finally about halfway through the book the reader is introduced to a deformed academic of slight stature who has devoted his life to the study on alchemy. Over the course of the next few pages, and sometimes twice on the same page, he is described as a lush footed little alchemist.

For he'll from me to propose that this lack of imagination suggests that Mr Eddings may have become as tired of the series as some of his readers.
**C D Ward (pseud)**

*Thanks once again to the pseudonymous C D for his comments. David Eddings does indeed produce long sagas, parts of which could be described as unimaginative. But he tends to concentrate on character rather than on the plot, and he's also one of the most successful fantasy authors of the last decade, which is a mighty big reason for his books to be in print. As you and other agree – or disagree!*

## EAGER EAST MEETS WEIRD WEST

Dear FEAR
I write to you as the editor of the first and only Russian Gothic/weird-supernatural horror quarterly the *Mad Lab* (translated from the Russian). In this country we are the first to challenge the thrilling we risk of fear which the official album has no visa to. Deprived of every gilt charts and outlet we are in bad need of a dead support from those stalking sane and FEARless in the dark.

Maybe some of your readers would like to make their names known to the Ruskies? The guidelines are available for an SAE and IRC. The premiere issue of *Mad Lab* is dedicated to the supernatural horror fantasy genre and the emude to it in the USSR and abroad. Issue 2 will deal with the 100th anniversary of H P Lovecraft (editorial deadline April 10).
**Vladimir V Shelukhin Editor, The Nikolaev branch of Oversun Fan News Agency, Oversun, NB GOS-3 POB 22 327900 Nikolaev, USSR**

*Okay readers. They need your support. Here's your chance to spread a little info around get your knowledge-starved neighbours in the East. Get writing.*

## HOT FOR HUTSON

Dear FEAR
As a Shaun Hutson fan, I was looking forward to receiving issue 12 to read the interview as when it arrived I opened it with bated breath.

So what did I think? Brilliant! Your interviewer (Dave Hughes, I believe) is to be congratulated on a fine job. The interview was very informative and a good read to boot. Also thanks to Shaun for revealing some more of his pseudonyms. I for one will be scouring the local bookshops for these books.
**G Jukes Warley West Midlands**

*The irregular At Home features do seem to be going down well (congrats to Dave for another job well done) but we would like to know what type you want to group at in the future. Stephen Gallagher is next up, where his latest novel, Rain, is published in March. But don't wait, drill them sharpen your crayons and let us know.*

## KISS OF DEATH

Dear FEAR
I am very pleased and impressed with the interview you had (Daniel Rhodes, Issue 7). Your insightful questions brought out precisely the points and emphasis I wanted.

On my end of things, Adversary is hitting the stands in paperback over here. I've finished rewriting the third novel (unrelated to the first two, although still horror) finally settled on the title *Kiss of Death*. It will come out from St Martin's Press this spring. Meanwhile, I'm hard at work on a new book, which I hope to have finished by next summer.
**Daniel Rhodes, USA**

Dear FEAR
First of all, all this talk of "bad mouthing", "venting bad blood" and "machinemakers" is a little silly. I've always got on pretty well with David Wingrove when I've met him, and my comments were about his book.

But it seems that despite his own experience as an SF critic, he cannot accept criticisms, he wrote a similarly angry and hurt letter in *Foundation*, the critical journal of the Science Fiction Foundation, when it dared to point out some of the weaknesses of *Trillion Year Spree*, which he co-wrote with Brian Aldiss.

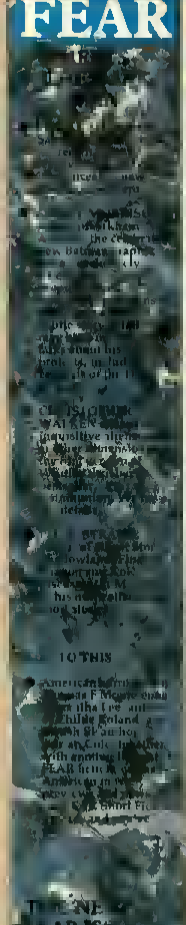
Okay so he's hurt that I said I thought his book was bad, he's put years of love and work into it, and I understand his feeling that way but stamping his foot and yelling abuse in this way is really not on. I criticised the book not the author. Wingrove has criticised me personally. His suggestion that I might not have "even opened the bloody cover" is possibly libellous in that it impugns my integrity as a critic; it is certainly untrue. I read every word of the book, knowing that I would be reviewing it. If I hadn't been reviewing it, I would have given up very early on, and saved myself a lot of boredom.

I stand by every word. I've said about it. I honestly believe that it is a seriously bad book. Wingrove wishes you to "force Barrett to state — in perfect detail — what's so bad about the book". Rather than drag on this debate here, I would refer Wingrove and any other interested readers to my 2,000 word critique of *Chung Kuo* which should be in the next edition of *Foundation*.

David Wingrove asks "what does publishers hype have to do with the subject itself?" A good question. In this particular case nothing. As a fulltime journalist, I read press releases and publicity puff pieces almost every day. I'm used to hype but the amount of quite unjustified praise that Wingrove himself heaps on the book in the 16 A4 pages of hype that was sent out with *Chung Kuo* was vomit inducing. I say Wingrove rather than a PR writer because much of it was in the form of first person answers to questions, or the author himself saying "How I came to write this book". I've no objection to an author saying what a book is about, but I do object to an author praising his own work in such a self congratulatory manner. That's bad.
**David V Barrett, Croydon, Surrey**



NEXT ISSUE



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